



Entering the Current Middle Ages, by Baroness Josseline de la cour

Cockatrice

August, A.S. 53

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Cockatrice Calendar AS 53 (2018)

Spring Edition	Submissions due	1 October
	Published	1 November
Summer Edition	Submissions due	1 January
	Published	1 February

From the Editor

Greetings all!

I was overwhelmed this edition by the number and diversity of the articles I received, so my heartfelt thanks goes out to all our contributors. We have research articles on market bags and medieval currency; practical guides to skaldic poetry and making a bow stand; and a few articles exploring new formats as well. So three cheers for the authors of this edition!

I am also pleased to publish the results of the survey we've been running over the last three months. I asked Lochac "How can Cockatrice improve?" and over fifty people responded, sharing a diverse range of perspectives. The full results are discussed in a report at the end of this edition, but two themes emerged that are significant for Cockatrice's future: a strong desire for Cockatrice articles to be available in an online format, and a feeling among those who had not yet written for Cockatrice that their work would be unwelcome.

Our commitment to inclusivity and hospitality as a Society is something I value highly, and I think both of these issues challenge us to put those values into practice. Many people are deeply

attached to the current format, for its own sake as well as a legacy of the original hard-copy newsletter, but PDFs present access problems to people with vision impairments, using mobile phones, or hoping to find content with a google search. As a compromise, next edition I will be trialling dual publication – although I am still weighing up the logistics of the various options available.

The second issue is more complex. Are the standards of Cockatrice higher than the work most artisans can produce? Or is that only the perception of our readers? Is that a problem? If so, how can we change it?

Our purpose is to share A&S stories across Lochac, and inspire people on their personal journey in the Arts and Sciences. I believe that making Cockatrice a more welcoming publication for less experienced artisans, writers, and researchers will support that purpose, even if the question of how to *do* it is a difficult one to answer.

If you would like to offer suggestions or support in making Cockatrice a more inclusive publication, please feel free to get in touch.

Yours in Service,

Gwen verch David

A Decorated Bow Stand

Lord Wintherus Alban

Archery tournaments are a great experience, bringing back traditions and customs of times long ago. At Rowany Festival, one could see bows of endless variety and beautiful arrow fletchings made in the personal colours of the competing archers. Round after round would see shooters empty their quivers into battered targets and the Marshal in charge would make the call for all to collect their arrows and count their scores.

But notice what happens after the call: archers simply drop their bows onto the ground. An archery course can be a rough place. There's dirt, grass and mud. There's also the occasional careless booted foot. We mostly shoot in open fields, and animals often leave smelly surprises for anyone not careful to look down beforehand.



Documentation on portable period bow stands might not exist, but that is no barrier to providing our beloved bows with a protected place in which to rest. I didn't invent this, and have seen similar designs on the field. What I did do is try to make somewhat more period in appearance with some authentic decorations. I wanted it to be both portable and sturdy, and hopefully pleasing to the eye.

How to Make the Bow Stand

In making a bow stand the first thing is to get the wood. I prefer maple, but here I used a cheap cypress pine that you can find in most hardware stores. If you plan to decorate your bow stand by burning a design on the wood make sure the timber you use has low moisture content. Otherwise you'll have sap bubbling out as you burn it, and it's difficult to get clear edges and detail.

Cut the wood into three pieces. All pieces are 19mm thick and 65cm wide. The middle one will be the longest, and the two arms on either end must be under half its length. You'll see in the photos why this is so, as the arms fold in when not in use. The exact length of the centre piece and the arms will vary depending on your own bow. I use a very short horsebow so my overall measurements are 31cm for the arms, and 62cm for the centre piece.

Shape the end of the arms so that it will hold your bow in place. I like to smooth it out into a kind of C-shape. This holds the bow in place even when windy, and when the bow stand is folded up it creates a little window where you can see the exact centre of your decorated bow-stand. Be sure to put an eye-catching design in that place when you decorate later.



To shape the arms I used a jigsaw to get a rough cut, then used files and sandpaper to achieve the desired shape. Once ready I smoothed out the entire arm with fine sandpaper.



The centre piece is where the real work is. Bow stands may not be period, but you can certainly make the decorations period. In the centre I burned my personal device. On either side I added a couple unicorns.



The C shape of the arms means that the device can be seen even when the arms are folded down.



The rest of the centre was filled out with a few birds and rabbits as seen on manuscripts out there in history. Burning bunnies into wood never gets old.



The feet under the centre piece swivel out to give stability when in use, and turn in underneath when in storage. These are attached with a single screw with a thick rubber washer in between. The washer gives it a little resistance when turning and it stays in the position you set it to.



The feet are cut to a more pleasing shape, and I chose a vaguely arrow-like shape on either end.



I also split the wood for these feet, so that they are around 5mm thick, whilst the stand itself are pieces that are 13mm thick. Below is a side view showing the relative thicknesses of the thin swivel foot, the centre of the bow stand, and the rubber washer in between.



The arms are held on with simple brass hinges and screws. Be careful with how deep you pre-drill the holes, but try to get them as long as possible for extra strength. It all depends on how heavy your bow is that needs to be supported.



I sanded it all finely and finished it off with a coat of Scandinavian oil. Works well enough for me, and I hope it might be of use to you also. Have fun with it!



*Hoisting the Lochac Flag
at Abbey Festival,
by Tony London*



Three Ingredient Subtlety Staples

*Mistress Victoria Thrakesina
(with thanks to those who participated in the Dence Park experimenting)*

Recently at the Barony of Rowany's Dence Park Arts and Sciences gathering we did some experiments with making marzipan and fondant from scratch. This turned out to be a lot easier than anticipated, with most ingredients readily available from either supermarkets or local cake supply shops, and the ingredients coming together quite quickly to form gently perfumed sweet pastes.

Marzipan

To make marzipan, take equal quantities of almond meal and powdered sugar and combine. Then incrementally add rosewater and knead until it forms a paste.

And that's pretty much it.

The ingredients can mostly be bought from local supermarkets, particularly if you live in the western suburbs of Sydney where rosewater is widely available. Pure icing sugar is powdered sugar (not icing mixture, which has some additional ingredients).

We found that the packet pre ground almonds meal is a bit too coarse, it needed to be ground more finely to form a smooth marzipan. Grinding can activate the natural oils in the nuts, which runs the risk of ending up with almond butter rather than almond meal. The trick (with thanks to Lady Jeneur for the tip) is to freeze the almonds prior to grinding them. This may add a bit more time to the preparation, but marzipan is otherwise very quick to make.

Most commercial marzipans feel that they need to remind everyone that they are nut based, so they add almond essence. There is at least one medieval recipe which recommends adding almond oil if it doesn't taste of enough of almonds (Delights for Ladies 1609), but it's not a regular feature. And the general consensus was that marzipan is much nicer without it.

Having made the paste, there are many options to using it to create fine subtleties, from marzipan fruits to baking and gilding, or just simply eating it as is!

Fondant

There is a Facebook page called "SCA Subtleties/Sotelties/Entremets/Sweet!" which had recently discussed the making of medieval fondant and there were a number of files with medieval fondant recipes to try (with thanks to Mistress Alys Katharine for her generous sharing of information).

We worked from a very simple recipe using gum tragacanth/tylose, powdered sugar and rosewater. It should also have included egg whites, but I forgot to bring eggs. Oops. But as it turned out the fondant worked fine without it, and I'm not sure what its role is in the recipe. Not having it did have the advantage that it made the recipe is vegan and egg allergy friendly.

Gum tragacanth is not easy to find, and it's quite expensive. Tylose is the synthetic version of gum tragacanth, and it is both a lot easier to find in cake supply shops, and considerably cheaper. So part of the experiment was to see if there was any discernible difference between the two.

We started by soaking the tragacanth/tylose with rose water, roughly a teaspoon with enough rosewater to dissolve the powder. We found that a little went a loooong way, and it was very goopy!



Once the tragacanth / tylose was fully absorbed and developed to full goopy-ness it was then just a process of adding the powdered sugar into the mix incrementally and kneading until the powdered sugar, tragacanth / tylose and rosewater were mixed into a smooth,

putty textured paste. For this part of the process it is really important that the powdered sugar is sieved to remove all lumps so that it blends in smoothly.

The experiment demonstrated that there was no discernible difference between the tylose and the tragacanth pastes, so if cost is a consideration, tylose is perfectly fine to use.



We didn't experiment with things like gilding or painting on the day, but I made a small batch of fondant with some of the leftover scrapings of the tragacanth goop that was stuck to the sides of the bowl and took that home to experiment with later. The fondant was stored in an airtight ziplock bag for just over a week before I had a bit of time to take the next steps. And it was perfectly fine during that time.

Having acquired a wooden mould from a local speciality store, it was just a matter of pressing the fondant into the mould then carefully removing it to ensure the impression was not damaged. The moulded fondant was then laid out carefully to dry. This took a few days, but it ultimately produced half dozen little neatly moulded windmills. The edges of the sugar windmills were a little rough, but that's due to me not being as careful with the edges as I should have been, rather than any flaw in the fondant itself.



Based on these experiments, I would recommend that if you are intending to make a subtlety from either marzipan or sugar fondant, try making it from scratch. It's not only the period thing to do, the product is much nicer as it is gently perfumed with rose water, and doesn't contain all the additional additives that shop bought products contain.

On Writing Skaldic Verse for Lochacers

Lord Anton de Stoc

There are three immediate issues about writing Skaldic Verse for Lochacers.

The first one is you aren't someone who speaks Old Norse, and your audience doesn't either. Language matters in poetry, but you do speak a language that has had some Old Norse grafted onto it, from back when the Northmen came to stay and farm.

The second one is you aren't someone who has been trained for it from birth, in a culture where skaldic verse was inhaled with your mother's milk. But what we do have is access to a lot of it, albeit mostly written down centuries after it was first performed (if you love Norse culture, thank a Christian monk today).¹

The third one – and this is the big one – is that your audience doesn't understand it at all. The purpose of skaldic verse is word-fame, and word-fame only gets from the skald to the audience if that audience understands it.

I'm going to talk about the general problem of language and poetry. My key example of a culture that faced this head-on was the Romans, who spoke Latin, but who absorbed most of their culture from the Greeks. Latin is a da-Dum language – 'Veni, Vidi, Vici' to quote some traitor to the Popular cause² – works because it pairs a stressed syllable and an unstressed syllable and it keeps doing it. Greek is a da-da-Dum language – lots of short vowel sounds, generally working best with two unstressed syllables leading to a stressed one. Romans started with trying to do Greek da-da-Dum poetry but using Latin, and then redesigned their whole idea of what poetry should sound like because Greek verse forms in Latin just don't work, and then we got dactylic hexameters and the rest of it.

English is a da-Dum language. To quote another politician 'Never in the history of human conflict has so much been owed to so few'.³ Roll that around in your mouth and

¹ <http://vikinganswerlady.com/ONLiteratureBibliography.shtml> Gunnvôr silfrahárr has not the word fame she deserves, for word fame has two edges, and as the in these days, the Viking Answer Lady is known of by those who think Thor is an Avenger, while not two in fifty thousand could tell you who Gunvor Silfraharr is.

² Gaius Julius Caesar was allegedly a member of the Popular party in Rome. Allegedly.

³ Winston Churchill, because kids these days.

find the da-Dums. Note that English is a pretty wordy language, and is nowhere near as compact as some others – to go back to the Romans, they did in the word ‘decimate’ what we need a sentence of ‘kill every tenth person’ to explain. English also borrows a lot of words, so there’s times when things just don’t fit, because the word ‘mutton’ come from a Romance language word ‘mouton’ from when the French knocked over England and stayed to rule, but ‘sheep’ is Germanic from their Anglo-Saxon shepherds.

The second problem is, I think, best solved by simplification into a form that you can build your poem within that is simple enough for you to write and for the audience to understand. There are a lot of different Skaldic forms, and I think you’re best off to get good with one of them – a simplified form of court verse (*drottkvaett*), with each six-line verse a line of ideally eight syllables, four of them stressed in da-Dum because English and at least one set of words that have the same sound in each line and one kenning per line. Each line should take about the same time to say, so it keeps the internal rhythm, so keep an eye on not using too many long or short sounds (your stressed syllables are the drum-beat that you have to keep to). Once people hear enough of that, then over the years we can play with more complicated and correct forms, because the audience has been educated so it can be receptive. Remember, the maximum contact of most of your audience to Norse culture will be Hammer of Thor and Yom’s Viking Town, so they don’t know what good sounds like.

The third issue is about the why you are doing this. That reason is word-fame. You don’t write about pretty mountain streams, you don’t write in praise of philosophy, you write about great deeds and the person who did them. This is not about your word-fame either – that will happen as people remember the poem of recognition you wrote, but it is about giving word-fame to the hero.

Okay, now that’s out of the way, let’s talk perhaps the defining feature of Skaldic poetry – kennings. Go read the Debbie Potts’ ‘Skaldic Poetry – a short introduction’, because she can explain it better than I can (the article came out of the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Celtic and Norse Cultures at the University of Cambridge, and that’s authority you can rely on).⁴

⁴ http://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/resources/mpvp/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Introduction-to-Skaldic-Poetry_Debbie-Potts.pdf. Go. Read. This. Now.

I'm going to go back to Yoms Viking Town. It has good kennings – each line is about a body part, but it never names it, but makes an indirect reference the audience can figure out. Good kennings make good skaldic verse, but in this form they must be short (you've only got an eight-syllable line with four stresses, remember).

Okay, so here is the form: daDUM daDUM daDUM daDUM. Do that six times, keeping four stressed syllables, at least one set of similar sounds per line, kennings if you can. No rhymes, no chorus, no repeated lines. Let's get some phrases and see how it works.

Ring Giver. Rrr-ING gi-VER. This is great, as it's four syllable da-DUM, and the rrrr in Ring and Giver.

Sword Breaker. Ss-ORD brea-KER. Again, great, as it's four syllable da-DUM with the long r in sword and breaker.

Bright burnished byrnie breaker. Brrr-IGHT bur-NISH ed-BYR-nie BREa-ker. Note we're cheating on eight syllables with that last ker, but we don't care. Four alliterations on 'br' four stressed syllables and a kenning as you could say 'sword' but 'bright burnished byrnie breaker'. This is golden. It's also not mine.

Walking the white whale-road. Wal-KING the WHI-te WHA-le ROAD. This is a kenning. A whale is a sea animal, so the whale-road is the sea, and a white white whale-road is therefore an icy sea. Walking the white whale-road is therefore a sea journey in winter. Which by itself is meat for word-fame, because what coward would ever do that?

I'm going to talk about good old English's issues with long and short sounds. Here is something written to our form, about a generous man in a bad winter.

In famine, he feasted
 Not his hall, but all.
 Barley bread and brown beer
 Flowed as ice on rivers
 Rings he gave to his thanes.
 Kingly he was, in that his hall.

Count off the second line – that's only five syllables, but it works, because hall and all are both really long sounds. If we jammed a word near or between 'his' and 'hall' to get it to

the technically correct eight syllables and turned it into ‘Not his hall companions but all’ it’s eight syllables but it’s so long that your audience will lose the beat (and, also, companions is French, and Romance languages are not the friend of da-DUM. They want to use Greek da-da-DUM instead). The reverse also applies – when you have lots of short sounds, keep four of them stressed so the length of each line keeps the rhythm.

- First line is all about the Fs, and we give a F about that.
- Second line is about the Hs and the ‘alls’.
- Third line leans on the Bs and Rs, and they deliver.
- Fourth line is a sort of kenning – it evokes winter, and the image of enough beer to float the bread on. Yeah, yeah, Vikings were all about the mead because that comes from waste land and they are too short on grain to brew much beer, but we don’t care enough because Lochacers love beer.
- Fifth line has the Gs in rings and gave, and the long a in gave and thanes.
- Final line is all about the Hs.

The whole thing is about adding to the word-fame of the ruler as a generous man. For it to really work, it needs to be a verse in a bigger piece that names him, but let’s keep the eye on the prize - giving word fame to someone in a manner that sounds like it has been actually translated from Old Norse, and it does that.

Now, get your fingers out to count to eight and to six, and say da-DUM enough that you know the difference between the two. Say some long and short syllables so you understand that, and get an idea of how long a line takes to say.

Next, think of a heroic act, and write it up to publicly compliment whoever did it, because they deserve word-fame. This is Lochac, so service brings honour, as well as the arts and sciences and battle.

Dirty kitchens shame hosts and guests
 Rotted food, the enemy of all
 Thane he was, he has fed crows
 But bucket he knew, and mop as well
 His Jarls honour he kept bright
 No work that keeps honour brings shame.

In a Norse context, this is some serious slander – the author is implying his Lord is too poor to own slaves, and the thane in question is humble enough to do what is at absolute minimum unmanly women’s work. In a Norse context, if I am even suspected of being the author of that slander-verse (niovisur), I’m courting a blood feud with both him and his Lord at best, and I’m pretty sure a Norse jury would decline to convict on murder (and the ‘he has fed crows’ is a kenning that bluntly says he has killed men). However, in a Lochac context, this is serious compliment – we think knights should push mops because service brings honour, and thus as a skald your job is to make sure those deeds have word-fame so that honour is recognised.

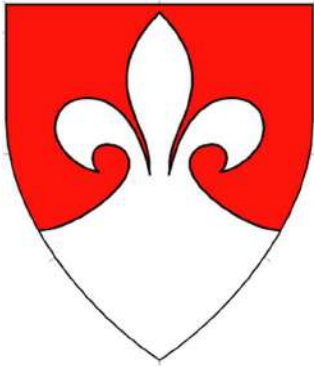
Finally, you can use Skaldic verse to write nice things about girlies – skaldic love poetry (mansongr) was a thing - but if you do you’re strongly implying both you fucked her and that she’s lower social status than you, so be prepared to fight all her male relatives, and probably some of her female ones, if you perform it in public or distribute copies. I take no responsibility for blood feuds. While given the general role of women in Norse culture I think female skaldic poets were a thing, I don't know what mansongr by women about men were written or what they meant as to relative social status...but I'm thinking just to be on the safe side, keep private things private, and beware of informers.

All that said, go out and write some Skaldic verse, perform it in private to make sure it works, and then if you need to get someone else to read it out at the feast if you’re bad at public speaking, do so, because honourable deeds deserve word-fame, and word-fame happens when good poetry is delivered well. If it is going to be read, as someone who has read written material by candlelight, use a big font – It's six lines of eight syllables, use twenty-four point or better.

But let's get more Skaldic poetry out there, because great deeds deserve word-fame.

Meet the Artisan: Lady Fiora Vespucci, Book Herald

An interview by Lady Gwen verch David



Lady Fiora's personal arms

Tell me a bit about yourself – how long have you been involved in the SCA? What group are you from?

I started in the SCA at Canterbury Faire 2013. A lot of my university friends had been involved for a long time beforehand, but for some reason I'd decided not to join them. CF 2013 I attended because my best friend was running it and he told me I had to go. I had a great time and was immediately hooked.

I'm in the Hamlet of Gildenwick in Southron Gaard now. I'm the Headwoman, but that not's an official leadership position; I'm just a contact point for people.

Were you involved in getting that group off the ground?

There was already a medieval group up here: Nelson Medieval. They're sort of... SCA-adjacent? A lot of people made the yearly pilgrimage to Canterbury Faire, but didn't play SCA otherwise, and did their own thing. Nelson Medieval's now mostly defunct. The Hamlet is pretty much those of us who are Very SCA and do a lot of SCA stuff, plus the people who are more casual or not that into the SCA at all, but still play together. We have monthly-ish A&S and we really need to get some regular archery and fight practice going.

We've had a Royal Visit for a Rose Tourney and a Collegium since we became a Hamlet; both very fun events. The Rose Tourney (run by Canon Herald; we have a pretty weird herald-to-populace ratio here) was extra-fun, because there was only about twenty people - mostly local - so we all got to sit around the same table with the King and Queen.

What got you interested in heraldry?

Like many people, I was trying to design my device. I was bombarding a book herald friend, Cecily de Montgomery, with questions, but she had to go away for the weekend. She directed me to one of the heraldry groups on Facebook and I became obsessed over that weekend. She showed me how to do submissions, and we had some other friends looking to register names and devices, so it went from there.

So you've kept helping people with their own designs and registrations?

More like track people down and bother them until they give up and agree to register, but yes. I moved to Ildhafn in 2015, so I did some submissions there, but now I do them all over the country.

I discovered it was much easier when I said, "Here are some cool name resources and I've got some suggestions based on your device ideas; I'll do all the paperwork." I love that we have electronic submissions that the Kingdom pays for - so much less stuffing around!



Image from the Codex Manesse that inspired Lady Fiora's arms (Cod. Pal. germ. 848, fol.319r)

Is there a process you like to follow when you're doing heraldry consults, or is it different with each person?

Most people have an idea of at least a first name they want. If they don't, I direct them off to <http://dmnes.org/names> for a browse. Sometimes they have a specific name/meaning they want. I'm much better at devices, so I spend a lot of time bothering ffride wlfssdotter for documentation assistance.

For devices, I tend to ask people for their favourite colour, and whether they prefer gold or silver, plus any design ideas they have. Are there devices they like the look of? Do they want canting arms? Are they obsessed with pigs? Do they want something really simple? That sort of thing.

There are so many options, I can see how people just getting into things get horribly confused, so I tend to start pretty simple with my suggestions. That's also my own personal bias; Cecily pretty much drilled 'Simple is Good' into me and my own arms are field-only. So I tend to design things using a max of three tinctures and two charges.

What happens when you're consulting with someone and they're really attached to an idea that's not feasible? How do you handle it?

The best way to go is to find out what they like best about their idea. Usually it's a particular charge doing a particular thing ('I must have this wolf and it must be holding this weapon', for instance). I try to keep their core idea and work around it with suggestions. Sometimes it's a style thing and their artwork isn't registerable. In that case, I

go with ‘we can register it using more standard artwork, but how you display it afterwards is entirely up to you’. Sometimes it's completely non-registerable, in which case, well...registration isn't mandatory. If it makes them happy, then I just tell them it can't be registered, but they can keep using it without registering it.

That makes sense. Sometimes there isn't a good compromise.

That's why I like to get to my victims early, before they fall in love with something that isn't SCA-compatible! That said, I think most heralds, myself included, will work really hard to make something work if the person is completely in love with it.

What's your favourite heraldry project that you've worked on?

My favourite is the one I started for Canterbury Faire this year and has taken off since. I end up with a lot of rejected devices, because I draw up a lot of suggestions. I also find gaps in the Ordinary & Armorial and draw up devices to fill them.

This year, I ran Project Free to a Good Home (now Project Ready to Arm) at Canterbury Faire and had a great response. Mistress Katherine Kerr was good enough to do all the typography and Lady Sigrith Vigdisardatter gave me some of her spare devices and did backup conflict checks. I used my \$50 budget as Baronial Herald for the printing. I'm hoping to take it over to Rowany Festival at some point.



*Project Free to a Good Home at
Canterbury Faire*

Have you considered setting up an online 'home' for the project?

I may put it up on our household's website, or add a gallery to SCA Heraldry Chat, or maybe start a new Facebook group or page for it, working with the mods of SCA Heraldry Chat to get good crossover. For now, people are messaging me and I'm doing consults from a distance. In the last week or so, I've done submissions for four different kingdoms, which is really cool (though really confusing because their processes are very different to ours).

Getting more heralds on board to send me more devices would be amazing, though. People have volunteered to conflict check the devices for practice, which is a really good idea. Conflict checking can be pretty tricky (I still stuff it up sometimes).

Do you have any advice for people interested in learning about book heraldry?

Get an OSCAR account and read the comments. Similarly, join SCA Heraldry Chat on Facebook. SENA and all our precedents are *so* confusing when you're starting out. Seeing the rules in action and how people are applying them really help navigate the nitty-gritty.

Names don't have to be boring - have a read of

<http://heraldry.sca.org/names/misplacednamesbyname.htm> for a good laugh.

Have a look at period armorials for ideas. And most of all, don't be afraid to ask for help! There are heaps of other heralds out there who are more than happy to answer all the questions you think are stupid.

I'm very indebted to Lady Cecily for answering all my stupid questions when I was starting out, and Mistress ffride for continuing to answer them now.



Their Majesties in Innilgard, by Mistress Anna de Wilde

The Many Kinds of Money in Mediaeval Europe

Lord Ælfred se leof

The business and computer news has recently had a lot to say about ‘alternative currencies’, most notably in the form of so-called ‘crypto-currencies’ like Bitcoin and Ethereum. Prior to the crypto-currencies, the same outlets ran stories about ‘virtual currencies’ used in online worlds like *Second Life* and *World of Warcraft*.

Several scholars argue that folks of the SCA period had their own sort of alternative currency, and a good one, too. According to Douglas Rushkoff, “from the tenth through the thirteenth century ... most of Europe enjoyed two main kinds of currency: centralized money, used for long-distance transactions, and local currency for daily transactions ... because of the peculiar bias of this money, the people who used it were the most prosperous working class ever”.¹

Rushkoff does not cite any references in support of his story, so I set out to write my own story of alternative currencies in the Middle Ages (with citations). This turned out to be harder than I expected, even without trying to answer the question of whether or not the working class of the tenth to thirteenth centuries really was the most prosperous one ever.

Museums are full of coins, and mammoth books have been published full of photographs and the names of kings responsible for issuing them; I often referred to the one edited by Martin Jessop Price in writing this article. But these tend to focus on the metallurgical and artistic qualities of the coins themselves rather than their use as money. Even Peter Spufford’s *Money and Its Use on Medieval Europe*, which explicitly sets out to write about money rather than coins, tends towards paragraph after paragraph describing how King So-and-So issued the Silver Doodad in the Year Such-and-Such. For this article, I want to focus on the more abstract concept of a *currency*, being a unit of measure of economic value as distinct from its physical representation, and the characteristics of the currencies that existed in mediaeval Europe.

¹ Rushkoff, Douglas. 2011. *Life Inc: How Corporatism Conquered the World, and How We Can Take It Back*. New York: Random House, p. 164.

Pennies, Shillings, and Pounds

A convenient point at which to start a story of currencies in mediaeval Europe is Charlemagne's introduction of the "penny" (or *denier*, derived from the Roman *denarius*, in Continental languages) in the eighth century. Most or all historians agree that the penny formed the basis of all conventional currency in Western Europe until well past the end of the SCA period – all the way into the middle of the twentieth century in the UK, Australia and New Zealand. Some historians relate that Charlemagne also introduced the concepts of "shillings" (20 pennies) and "pounds" (12 shillings) even though no actual coins having these values existed until much later.



Silver denier minted by Charlemagne, c. 793-81, obverse (left) and reverse. Image courtesy the American Numismatic Society, <http://numismatics.org/collection/1961.144.1>

Charlemagne's empire was broken up after his death, and by the end of the tenth century various independent jurisdictions ranging from towns to kingdoms were minting their own coins. These were still called pennies or deniers, with multiples known as shillings and pounds, but they no longer had a common value fixed by Charlemagne's central mint. Consequently a penny issued by one political unit might have a different value to a penny issued by another political unit, just as modern countries like the Australia and New Zealand have their own measure of a "dollar".

Most historians agree that amount of metal in pennies declined over time, for reasons summarised by Luca Fantacci as "consumption, clipping, counterfeit, imperfections in production – these sometimes deliberate on the part of the state authority".² I take the latter comment to refer to the practice of *seigniorage*, through which a sovereign replaced existing coins with new coins of the same face value but lower metal content. Seigniorage

² Fantacci, Luca. 2004. "Complementary Currencies: a Prospect on Money from a Retrospect on Premodern Practices." ISE Working Paper, Bocconi University, p. 6.

allowed the sovereign to create more coins using the same amount of metal, returning coins of the same face value to the citizenry while keeping the extra coins to pay his or her own bills.

By the thirteenth century, the value of the metal in a penny was much less than the face value of a penny. Everyone seems to agree that some new type of coin was needed, but historians give a number of different motivations – not necessarily mutually exclusive – for this.

For Fantacci, as well as Roger Svensson, the increasing size of transactions in commercial centres like Milan and Genoa required larger-value coins containing metal with higher value. For Hallsmith and Lietaer, re-issuing coins became increasingly impractical as the size of political units grew. For Felix Martin, seigniorage was open to abuse and unpopular amongst the increasingly-important moneyed classes whose coins it devalued (or ‘debased’). For these classes, the value of the metal in a coin guaranteed that the coin was actually worth something.

Whatever the reason for the new coins, Fantacci argues that their introduction resulted in a dual currency system in which “small currency” (pennies) was used within local markets, where community agreement on the value of a coin was more important than its metal content, and “large currency” was used in long-distance markets, where the amount of silver in a coin stabilised its value across political divisions. The new coins were known as *groats* in English (related to ‘great’ in the sense of ‘large’) and similar names in other languages.

Svensson makes a similar division of coins into “short-lived” and “long-lived” though his timeline is somewhat different to what I’ve described above: he has England and western Europe converting to long-lived currencies around the twelfth century, while central Europe and Scandinavia continued to use short-lived currencies into the fourteenth century.

The “peculiar bias” of short-lived coins that Rushkoff refers to is that they tend to lose their value over time, due to periodic re-issuing and debasement. This should encourage possessors of short-lived coins to spend or invest them, rather than stash them under the proverbial mattress. This should in turn increase the *velocity of circulation* (as Hallsmith and Lietaer term it), encouraging economic activity. (Contrast this with Bitcoin, which got

people excited in part because the value of a bitcoin *increased* between the time of its issue and the time this article was written.)

Bezants, Ducats, and Dinars

The astute reader may notice that Rushkoff's words at the beginning of this article have dual currencies appearing by the tenth century, a few hundred years before the appearance of groats and their Continental equivalents. He (as do Lietaer and Dunne) explicitly refers to a coin known as the *bezant* playing the role of large currency during this period.



Gold solidus minted by Constantine VII, AD 921, obverse (left) and reverse. Image courtesy the American Numismatic Society, <http://numismatics.org/collection/1966.169.12>

Bezant is a popular name for a gold coin introduced into the Roman Empire by Constantine in the fourth century, and by him called the *solidus*. Nicephorus II changed the name to *nomisma* in the tenth century. Unlike pennies, the bezant maintained more or less the same value and metal content from its introduction until the eleventh century, when an economic collapse led to the bezant becoming debased and eventually being replaced by new coins in the twelfth century.

Roberto Sabatino Lopez, and others following him, refer to the bezant as “the dollar of the Middle Ages”, meaning it had something like the role of the US dollar in the twentieth century as the currency accepted more or less everywhere. After the bezant's demise, Jere Bacharach applies the same phrase to the *ducat*. This was a gold coin introduced in Venice at the end of the fourteenth century, and from there used as an international currency as had the bezant before it.

Another option for international traders was the *gold dinar* (also discussed in detail by Bacharach), introduced in the Islamic world by Caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan at end of

the seventh century. The dinar was itself modelled on the Byzantine solidus, and, like the *denier*, takes its name from the Roman *denarius*. Dinars appear at various places and times in Europe – Offa, king of Mercia, made a particularly famous copy of one of Abd al-Malik’s dinars in the eighth century – and were minted in Europe itself by Muslim rulers of Andalusia, but seem to have had little influence on scholars of alternative currencies.

Spufford actually has *three* sorts of money existing in Europe by the beginning of the fifteenth century: gold money such as the ducat used for international trade and large transactions within a country; “white” money (groats) made from silver for use in ordinary transactions within a single country; and semi-official “black” money (debased pennies) containing little or no valuable metal, and eventually made entirely of copper. Black money was used as small change when there was either not enough white money in circulation, or where the value of a transaction was too small for the available white money. He doesn’t offer an opinion on what economic consequences this might have had.

Banking

Notes and coins actually make up only a relatively small part of the money supply in a modern economy: most of it exists as balances in bank accounts. Though banks of sorts existed at least as far back as the Roman Empire, they only become interesting for the history of mediaeval currencies in the thirteenth century. At this time, banks began offering so-called *bills of exchange* that allowed merchants to draw money on their bank accounts (something like a cheque) rather than carry large amounts of coin or metal from one place to another in order to settle payments.

Spufford credits the introduction of bills of exchange with an increase in productive investment, since bills of exchange allowed people to move or loan their money where it could be put to the best use, instead of having to defend a hoard of coins or ingots lest they be stolen. In his view, this change had much greater effects than the introduction of ducats and the like at around the same time.

Martin tells how this introduced yet another currency into Europe: the bills of exchange were written in *écu de marc*, a kind of international currency defined by the brokers of such exchanges (an *écu* was a French coin of the period). A merchant in one country could purchase a bill of exchange for some number of *écu de marc* using his or her local currency, and have this bill converted to another local currency at the other end of the transaction. For Martin, this was “the harbinger of an epochal political change [...] one that would

change the face of finance forever”: money could be created by private entities and not just by sovereign governments (meaning Bitcoin is far from the first to do this). Following this thread, however, this would take us beyond the end of the SCA period so I will end the story here.

Necessity coinages

Finally, Edward Besley’s chapter in Martin Price’s book notes that extreme circumstances might lead to the creation of another kind of local currency, called a “siege coinage” or “necessity coinage”. The former term refers to currencies issued by the administrators of cities under siege, to be used while the siege prevented access to the currency normally in use. Other “necessity coinages” were minted to pay soldiers on campaign. In both cases, the temporary currency was intended to be redeemable with the normal currency when conditions returned to normal.

Conclusion

The history of money is a complicated business. Various historians have between one and four currencies co-existing in any one place at any one time, each one used for a different kind of transaction, even without considering the number of jurisdictions minting their own sorts of “pennies”, “groats” and other things.

Several differing views exist on the importance and effect of each kind of currency. For some, the use of local currencies such as the penny was a boon to the local economy, while for others the debasement associated with them was all but criminal. Technologies that one might think to be at the opposite ends of the scale – low-value local currencies and international bills of exchange – are both credited with encouraging their owners to engage in economic activity rather than hoard valuable metals.

Either way, I hope this article has shown that there’s more to money than “King So-and-So issued the Silver Doodad in the Year Such-and-Such.”

References

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*Dark Ages Encampment
through the Morning Fog of
Rowany Festival 2017,
by Lord Bjorn Bassason*

The Market Wallet

Jeneur le Geline

What is a market wallet?

A market wallet is a long narrow bag, enclosed at both ends with an opening in the middle, so that both ends can be filled. The standard ways of carrying market wallets appear to be over a shoulder or over a walking staff or crutch.

Why should you consider using one?

- You can make your wallet to suit your uses from small enough for a wallet, cup and drink bottle to large enough serious loads
- You can modify the length to suit your load and your body shape
- They can be held hands free when standing still or walking slowly (I usually place a hand/forearm over the wallet when walking fast)
- They are quite comfortable even when quite heavily loaded as the load is distributed over a wider area than with a standard single shoulder strap bag
- They pack up small, making them useful when you have limited luggage and/or storage capacity
- There is lots of evidence for their use across a wide range of places and times by a wide range of people
- They are made of commonly available materials.

Where is the documentation?

There are lots of market wallets in period art; the following figures are a selection in roughly chronological order. (Full details are at the end of the article.)

Figure 1:
Stuttgart
Passionale



Figure 2:
Perikopenbuch aus dem
Benediktinerinnenkl
oster Sankt Erentrud
auf dem Nonnberg
(Periscope book,
Saint Erentrud)



Figure 3: Crusader Bible/ Morgan Picture Bible/ Maciejowski Bible/Shah ‘Abbas Bible**Figure 4:** The Oscott Psalter**Figure 5:** The Luttrell Psalter**Figure 6:** Carving on the outside of Martebo Church, island of Gotland in Sweden**Figure 7:** Hours of Charlotte of Savoy

Figure 8: Hours of Charlotte of Savoy**Figure 9:** Book of hours**Figure 10:** Horae ad usum Parisiensem**Figure 11:** Le Roman de la Rose**Figure 12:** Heures d'Adélaïde de Savoie, duchesse de Bourgogne. Avril

Figure 13: Speculum historiale**Figure 14:** Les malheureuses Fortunes et fins des nobles hommes et femmes or Fortune and Poverty in De Casibus**Figure 15:** Die Geburt Christi (The Nativity)**Figure 16:** Le Livre des faiz monseigneur saint Loys (The Book of the Lord of St Loys)**Figure 17:** Hours of Henry VIII**Figure 18:** The Fight Between Carnival and Lent**Figure 19:** The Thames at Richmond, with the Old Royal Palace**Figure 20:** Västgötaknalle, in the book Gamla Stockholm

What was the point of all of those pictures?

The point was to demonstrate the diversity of market wallets and their users. Market wallets are varied in:

Size

- quite small, suitable for carrying cup, wallet, phone, drink-bottle and the other small necessities – figures 2, 4, 9
- quite large, useful when you need to carry an extra layer for later or feast kit – figures 1, 5-8, 10-15, 17, 19-20
- larger, suitable for use as saddle-bags on pack animals – figure 3
- so large that you need to distribute the weight over both shoulders – figures 16, 18

Period of use

- From the early 11th century in figure 1 through to the 19th century in figure 20

Users

- lots of farmers – figures 8, 10, 17
- travellers – figures 1-5, 9, 15
- possible washerwoman – figure 6
- person at the markets – figure 18
- monks and pilgrims – figures 11, 13
- the very poor – figure 15
- courtiers – figure 12
- imaginary creatures – figure 7
- travelling salesman – figure 20

Construction methods

- narrow slot in the middle of a side, running parallel to the length of the wallet – figure 1, 4, 7-8, 10-11
- wide opening in the middle of a side, running parallel to the length of the wallet – figure 13
- slot in the middle of a side seam – figure 15

Location of use

- Austria – figure 2

- England – figures 4-5, 19
- France – figures 3, 7-14, 17
- Germany – figures, 15
- Netherlands – figure 18
- Sweden – figures 6, 20

Considerations

Dimensions of items to be carried:

- Make sure your wallet is going to have enough space for the items you want to carry and be able to get it in and out easily
- If you want to carry large, hard sided items like folders or instrument cases, consider using an edge slit, though the top and bottom of the slit will need to be sewn especially strongly as there is greater force on the ends of the slit than on the slit in the middle of a face version

Your size and shape:

- Do you want the load to sit high on your chest?
- Are there going to be hard shapes that you want to place away from your squishier bits?

Load:

- If you plan to load the wallet heavily you may need to use a heavier weight fabric

Budget:

- If you have a small budget, smaller wallets can be made out of cotton calico though they will not last as long as ones made from heavier weight linen.

Non-documentable modifications to make life easier:

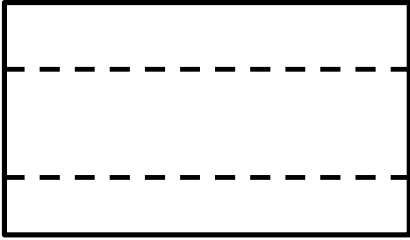
- A small pocket to hold things that might otherwise sift to the bottom
- If making a market wallet with an opening in the side seam, it is possible to add an extra layer of fabric though one or both ends so that the pockets are subdivided

Additional interpretation by Master Hugh de Calais

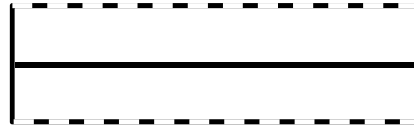
Master Hugh described visiting Europe and travelling to re-enactor events where it is common practice to fill a sack with straw and sleep on it. As part of his visit he walked with pack animals to carry luggage. He used a market wallet about 10cm longer than he is tall and 10cm wider than his shoulders to do triple duty as a market wallet, pack-saddle (as per figure 3) and mattress.

Construction methods

A) Cut (60 to 80cm by 100 to 140cm)
and finish long edges



B) Fold sides to the middle

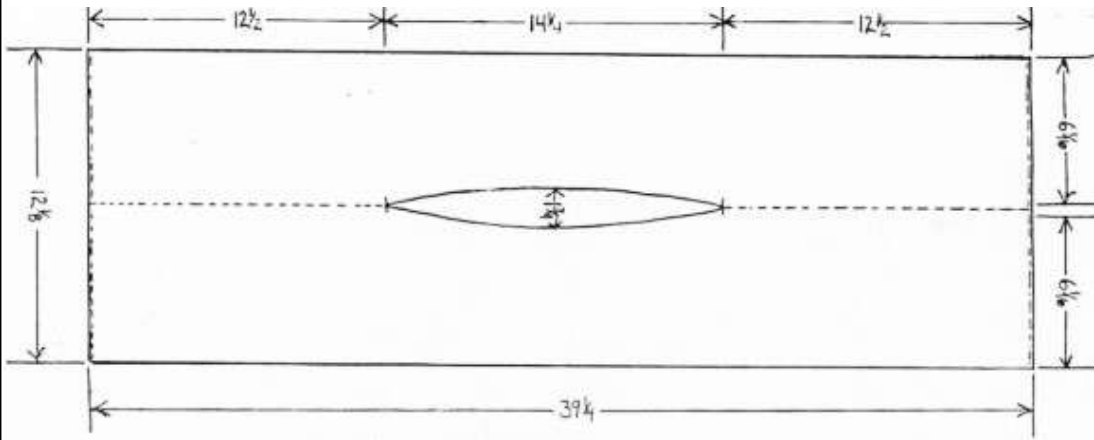


C) Sew then turn right way

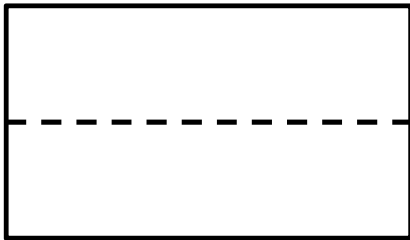


Dimensions for an 18th C original in inches

(<http://www.18cnewenglandlife.org/18cnel/wallets.htm#Market%20Wallet>):



A) Cut (60 to 80cm by 100 to 140cm) and hem the long sides



B) Fold in half (inside out)



C) Sew then turn right way



Further information

If you wish to do further research, the following search terms may be useful: ‘market wallet’, ‘Martebro sack’, ‘double carry sack’, ‘fässing’.

The following web sites contain useful additional information:

- <http://www.larsdatter.com/wallets.htm>
- <http://teffania.blogspot.com.au/2016/04/wallets.html>
- <https://themedievalhunt.com/2015/03/03/out-and-about-with-all-your-stuff/>
(though I haven’t seen any evidence for the transverse slit)
- <https://www.pinterest.com.au/gbertholet/market-wallet/?lp=true>

Image references

1. *Stuttgart Passionale* (c. 1110-1120 in Hirsau (near Stuttgart) Germany)

Information: <https://www.bildindex.de/document/obj00043030?medium=mi02981f08&part=1>

Image: <https://www.bildindex.de/document/obj00043030/mi02982e08/?part=1>

Description: man with market wallet, possibly about to load it onto an ox

2. *Perikopenbuch aus dem Benediktinerinnenkloster Sankt Erentrud auf dem Nonnberg* (*Periscope book, Saint Erentrud*) (c. 1140, Nonnberg Abbey, Salzburg, Austria)

Information:

<https://www.bildindex.de/document/obj00044560?part=10&medium=mi02399c10>

Image: <https://www.bildindex.de/document/obj00044560/mi02399c10/?part=10>

Description: man with small market wallet over a stick

3. *The Crusader Bible/Morgan Picture Bible/Maciejowski Bible/Shah ‘Abbas Bible* (c. 1240s, France)

Storage location: Morgan Library and Museum; MS M.638, fol. 6r, fol. 26v, fol. 27v, fol. 33v

Information: <https://www.themorgan.org/collection/Crusader-Bible>

Image: <https://www.themorgan.org/collection/crusader-bible/11#>

<https://www.themorgan.org/collection/crusader-bible/52#>

<https://www.themorgan.org/collection/crusader-bible/54#>

<https://www.themorgan.org/collection/crusader-bible/66#>

Description: donkeys loaded with one or 2 more long sacks, one with a goat

4. *The Oscott Psalter* (c. 1265-1270)

Storage location: British Library; MS 50000, f.13r

Information: http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_50000

Image: http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_50000_f013r

Description: man leading a donkey carries a market wallet over a stick

5. *The Luttrell Psalter* (c. 1325 – 1335, Lincolnshire, England)

Storage location: British Library; MS 42130, f.88v

Information: <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/sacredtexts/luttrellpsalter.html>

Image: http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_42130_f088v

Description: man leading a donkey carries a market wallet over a stick

6. *Carving on the outside of Martebo Church, island of Gotland in Sweden* (first half of the 14th Century)

Information: <http://albrechts.se/carrysack-from-martebo/>

Image: http://albrechts.se/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/martebo_01.jpg

Description: woman carrying large market wallet

7. *Hours of Charlotte of Savoy* (c. 1420-1425, in Paris, France)

Storage location: Pierpont Morgan Library; MS M.1004, fol. 39r & fol. 138r

Information: <http://corsair.themorgan.org/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=76924&V1=1>

Image: <http://ica.themorgan.org/icaimages/1/m1004.039ra.jpg>

<http://corsair.morganlibrary.org/icaimages/1/m1004.138ra.jpg>

Description, image A: Centaur or hybrid man with body of dog (?), holding clappers in right hand and holding a market wallet over their left shoulder

Description, image B: Hybrid man with body of a monkey (?) holding a market wallet over their right shoulder. The opening slot comes is in the middle of a face and comes quite close to the end shown

8. *Hours of Charlotte of Savoy* (c. 1420-1425, Paris, France)

Storage location: Pierpont Morgan Library; MS M.1004, fol. 3v

Information: <http://corsair.themorgan.org/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=76924&V1=1>

Image: <http://ica.themorgan.org/icaimages/1/m1004.003va.jpg>

Description: a farmer using a scythe has placed his market wallet in an adjacent tree, the market wallet has a long slot parallel to the long axis on the middle of a face

9. *Book of hours* (c. 1460, Paris, France)

Storage location: Pierpont Morgan Library; MS M.282, fol. 77r

Information: <http://corsair.themorgan.org/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=76908&V1=1>

Image: <http://ica.themorgan.org/icaimages/2/m282.077ra.jpg>

Description: woman carrying a small market wallet

10. *Horae ad usum Parisiensem* (c. 1475-1500)

Storage location: Bibliothèque Nationale de France; f13, fol. 2r

Information: <http://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc59106h>

Image: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8432895r/f13.item>

Description: farmer using a hoe with market wallet and water container

11. *Le Roman de la Rose* (late 15th C, France)

Storage location: Bodleian Library, University of Oxford; Douce 195, fol. 086v, fol. 087r

Information: <http://romandelarose.org/App.html#book;Douce195>

Image: <http://romandelarose.org/App.html#read;Douce195.081r.tif> , page 178 of 320

Description: monks/pilgrims using crutches under an armpit with market wallets over the opposite shoulder

12. *Heures d'Adélaïde de Savoie, duchesse de Bourgogne. Avril (Hours of Adélaïde de Savoie, page April)* (c. 1460-1465)

Artist: Adélaïde de Savoie

Storage location: Chantilly, musée Condé; Ms 76, Folio 4r

Information: https://www.photo.rmn.fr/archive/02-011469-2C6NU0GK5G_I.html

Image: https://cdn.radiofrance.fr/s3/cruiser-production/2017/06/4dbcb329-3ac1-480b-ae61-2173f3c3555f/738_054_bra011108.jpg

Description: Servants carrying market wallets and walking staves

13. *Speculum historiale* (c. 1463, Paris France)

Storage location: Bibliothèque Nationale de France; Fr 51, fol. 158

Information: <http://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc507698>

Image: <http://visualiseur.bnf.fr/ConsulterElementNum?O=IFN-8100046&E=JPEG&Deb=103&Fin=103&Param=C>

Description: Saint riding a donkey with a market wallet with a large opening

14. *Les malheureuses Fortunes et fins des nobles hommes et femmes or Fortune and Poverty in De Casibus* (c. 1470-1480)

Storage location: Bibliothèque Nationale de France; Fr. 132, folio 42v

Information: <http://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc44028f>

Image: <http://visualiseur.bnf.fr/ConsulterElementNum?O=IFN-8100118&E=JPEG&Deb=5&Fin=5&Param=C>

Description: a well dressed lady holds a beggar woman

15. *Die Geburt Christi (The Nativity)* (c. 1480, Colmar, Germany)

Artist: Martin Schongauer

Storage location: Staatliche Museen, Berlin, Germany

Information: <http://www.smb-digital.de/eMuseumPlus?service=ExternalInterface&module=collection&objectId=866018&viewType=detailView>

Image: <http://www.smb-digital.de/eMuseumPlus?service=DynamicAsset&sp=SU5mxm4Yx%2FVb9LVP7MZLDqo6z5lhONBxez%2FYx5EhVSCZjU0bcvvsnPxkoLiFJnF9QzRY98OZwV1b%0AfnOjhdzPJCrGy%2BOIZxfXys9Yi8S8yOLJSWmLEiBbbNZB9DZfvgZw&sp=Simage%2Fjpeg>

Description: a medium sized market wallet sits on the ground, wrapped around a stick, the opening slit runs down one edge.

16. *Le Livre des faiz monseigneur saint Loys (The Book of the Lord of St Loys)* (1480's, France)

Storage location: Bibliothèque Nationale de France; Fr. 2829, folio 207r

Information: <http://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc492778>

Image: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6000784s/f207.zoom.r=%20Le%20Livre>

Description: a pilgrim wears a double shouldered market wallet while guiding a blind pilgrim

17. *Hours of Henry VIII* (c. 1500, in Tours France)

Illuminator: Jean Poyer

Storage location: Pierpont Morgan Library; MS H.8, fol. 3v

Information: <http://www.themorgan.org/collection/Hours-of-Henry-VIII>

Image: <http://www.themorgan.org/collection/hours-of-henry-viii/11>

Description: a group of men scything hay and women raking hay using water containers and a market wallet to carry supplies

18. *The Fight Between Carnival and Lent* (c. 1559, Netherlands)

Artist: Pieter Breugel The Elder

Image: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pieter_Bruegel_d._%C3%84._066.jpg

Description: a man carries an exceptionally large market wallet over both shoulders; it is slit longways through the middle of each face

19. *The Thames at Richmond, with the Old Royal Palace* (early 17th Century)

Storage location: The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Information: <http://webapps.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/explorer/index.php?oid=1388>

Image: <https://i.pinimg.com/564x/de/26/a9/de26a9b31ae45bca8d2c18a0a1fadeb0.jpg>

Description: Flemish style painting with a woman with a bundle that appears to be a market wallet over one arm and a and basket

20. *Västgöta-knalle*, in the book *Gamla Stockholm* (1912, Stockholm, Sweden)

Artists: Claes Lundin & August Strindberg

Information: <https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knalle>

<https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%C3%A5nsing>

Image: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:V%C3%A4stg%C3%B6taknalle.tiff>

Description: a 19th Century Swedish travelling salesman or “knalle” with a large market wallet



*Great Northern War 2018
– Fire Tournament,
Baroness Josseline de la
cour*

On *Demaundes Joyous*, the First English Joke Book

Baroness Annys Blodwell

In 1511, Wynkyn de Worde published a book of riddles in English, called *The Demaundes Joyous*. This has been described as the first joke book published in English.

While riddles have a long history, this seems to be the first collection with an emphasis on humour. It is also the first time we see jokes in the now familiar pattern of question and answer, given here as ‘Demaunde’ (demand) and ‘Rx’ (shorthand for response). They are still framed in the form of logic puzzles, rather than simple word play, and what is interesting is the comparative lack of puns, which form the basis of much of the humour in modern riddle collections.

Jokes rely on a common understanding to work - no joke really survives being explained. This means that many of these jokes don’t seem funny today, mostly because we don’t have the common cultural experiences and expectations of people in the late 15th and early 16th centuries. For example, 15 (arguably 16) of the jokes rely on an understanding of the Christian faith that comes from regular Church attendance and adherence to the religious holidays, but not from reading the bible, nor having it available in English, instead relying on a culture of religious stories.

Some are so far removed from our common modern experience that the joke at first makes no sense. For example, riddle number 38:

Demaunde. Wherefore is it that an asse hathe so grete eyres.

Rx. Bycause het moder put no begyn on her heed in her yought.

D: What is the reason that an ass has such great ears?

Rx: Because her mother never put a bonnet on her head when she was young.

At first, this doesn’t seem to make any sense. But as late as the Edwardian era, there were still adverts for “infant caps” that had panels to cover a child’s ears, which claimed that by using these caps when the child slept, any tendency for the ears to stick out would be restricted and the ears would grow to be small and lie close to the head. We no longer have the idea that failure to make a child wear a constrictive coif or bonnet will directly lead to them having large, sticking-out ears as adults, and so the joke makes little sense.

Moreover, there are many things we think we know about the past that are actually the result of factually incorrect artefacts of film and literature, and these misapprehensions mean we completely fail to understand the joke. Take, for example, number 27:

Demaunde. What wode is it that ne reste vpon.

Rx. The claper of a lazars dysshe.

D: What wood is it that is never rested on?

Rx: The clapper of a leper's dish.

This doesn't seem to make sense – how does a dish have a clapper? We get that there is something to do with distaste for lepers and reluctance to touch their belongings, but fail to find any meaning in this.

But if you know that the stereotype of lepers carrying handbells to warn people of their presence is wrong, it begins to make some sense. From film we've absorbed the idea that lepers wandered about ringing handbells and calling "Unclean! Unclean". But metal bells, especially of the well-formed kind required to make a hand-bell, are expensive and unlikely to actually be used by beggars. What they *did* use was something called a clapper-dish, that is a wooden bowl with a lid, that would be clapped together to give warning of the leper's approach. In filmic terms, a leper is more likely to look and sound like Patsy from 'Monty Python and the Holy Grail', clapping coconut halves together.

Now the joke makes sense, with multiple layers of meaning: not only does it refer to the lack of desire to 'rest upon' a wooden bowl a leper eats out of, it also references the clapping of the lid on the bowl, making it impossible to sleep, and the continuous nature of that action. It makes sense, but as stated before, it's hard to laugh when the joke has to be explained.

And this is the major drawback when researching period humour – if you have to puzzle out the meaning, the joke gets lost. Comedy really does rely on timing, and part of that is that your audience gets the joke at the right point. If your audience doesn't really understand, or has to think it through, shifting their expectations of "normal", the joke falls flat. So for the SCA, is this collection really worth anything more than a historical curiosity?

Well, yes. I was surprised at how many of these I recognised. Numbers 4, 6, 18, 22, 32, 36, 42 and 44 are all in modern joke books in my personal collection – in an updated form, but still recognisably the same joke. These jokes, and the others that I still found

funny today, tended fell into a category that could be described as “Dad jokes” – jokes that are as likely to make you groan as to laugh. Moreover, the majority of the “Demaundes” are still easily understood, in the modern English ‘translation’ at least: numbers 9-21, 23-26, 28-31, 35, 43, 45 and 53 are easily understood, and reasonably assured of getting at least a groan if not a laugh.

There is some clumsiness in the wording that doesn’t sit well with modern ideas of how a joke should sound. In several instances, the punchline is explained, in others, to modern ears the wording falls a little flat. Take, for example, my favourite joke from this collection:

Demaunde. Who was he that lete the fyrst farte at rome.

Rx. That was the arse.

D: Who let loose the first fart in Rome?

Rx: That was the arse.

While I admit that this did make me giggle when I first read it, the phrasing isn’t ideal for retelling. When I tell this joke, I tend to reword it to something like:

Q: When Lochac first became a Kingdom, who let off the first fart?

A: Oh, some arsehole.

It’s the same joke, but the pacing and the word structure better fits modern expectations of how jokes sound. I’ve found most of the jokes that are still easily understood benefit from not tying myself too closely to the original wording, and because the humour is situational rather than heavily dependent on word-play and puns, it’s reasonably easy to do.

I was surprised at how little pure word-play there is in this collection. Modern riddles are largely based on puns, but only 53 is definitively based on punning. I don’t think this is because puns were not used for comedy value – certainly Chaucer was using puns a little over a hundred years earlier, and Shakespeare’s works, written barely a hundred years later, is laden with them. I suspect it has more to do with the idea of what a riddle is. Even though these are, in the main, humorous, they are still fundamentally logic puzzles, able to be solved by a process of careful analysis and lateral thinking. *Demaundes Joyous* is the first step we have evidence of, moving riddles from their logic-puzzle past, to their present comedic form.

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Appendix: The Demaundes

1	Demaunde. Who bare ye best burden that euer was borne. Rx. That bare ye asse wham our lady fled with our lorde in to egypte.	D: Who bore the best burden that was ever born? Rx. The ass who bore our Lady when she fled with our Lord into Egypt.
2	Demaunde. Where became ye asse that our lady rode upon. Rx. Adams moder dede ete her.	D: What happened to the ass that our Lady rode upon? Rx. Adam’s mother ate her.
3	Demaunde. Who was Adams moder. Rx. The erthe.	D: Who was Adam’s mother? Rx. The earth.
4	Demaunde. What space is from ye hiest space of the se to the depest. Rx. But a stones cast	D: What is the distance from the highest point of the sea to the deepest? Rx. A stone’s throw.

5	<p>Demaunde. Whan autecryst is come in to this worlde what thyng shall be hardest to hym to knowe.</p> <p>Rx. A hande barowe for of that he shall not knowe whiche ende shall goo before.</p>	<p>D: When the Anti-Christ is come into the world, what thing will be the hardest for him to understand?</p> <p>Rx. A handbarrow, for he won't know which end should go first.¹</p>
6	<p>Demaunde. How many calues tayles behoueth to reche frome the erthe to the skye.</p> <p>Rx. Nomore but one & it be longe ynough.</p>	<p>D: How many calves' tails does it take to reach from the earth to the sky?</p> <p>Rx. Only one, if it is long enough.</p>
7	<p>Demaunde. How many holy dayes be there in the yere ye neuerfall on the sondayes.</p> <p>Rx. There be eyght that is to were ye thre holy dayes after Eester. iii. after whytsondaye the holy ascencyon daye and corpus crysty daye.</p>	<p>D: How many holy days are there in the year that never fall on Sunday?</p> <p>Rx. Eight; the three holy days after Easter, three after Whitsun, Ascension day and Corpus Christi.</p>
8	<p>Demaunde. Whiche ben ye trulyest tolde thynges in the worlde.</p> <p>Rx. Those be ye steyres of chambres and houses.</p>	<p>D: What be the truest told things in the world.</p> <p>Rx. 'They are the stairs of chambers and houses.'²</p>
9	<p>Demaunde. Whiche parte of a sergeaunte loue ye best to warde you.</p> <p>Rx. His heles.</p>	<p>D: Which part of a sergeant at arms do you best like facing you?</p> <p>Rx. His heels.³</p>
10	<p>Demaunde. Whiche is the best wood and leest brente.</p> <p>Rx Vynes.</p>	<p>D: Which is the best wood but the least straight?</p> <p>Rx. Grapevines.</p>
11	<p>Demaunde. Whiche is the moost profytable beest & that men eteth leest</p>	<p>D: Which is the most profitable beast,</p>

¹ A handbarrow consists of a deep tray fixed between two poles – a wheelbarrow angles the poles and sets a wheel at one end, so that it can be used by one person not carried by two. There is a possible allusion here to a trope that drunkards are wheeled into hell in a barrow.

² I have not yet been able to work out the meaning of this joke.

³ A sergeant-at-arms could be compared to a modern police officer. 'His heels' = him walking away.

	of. Rx. That is bees.	that people eat the least of? Rx. Bees.
12	Demaunde. Whiche is the brodest water and leest Ieoperdye to passe ouer. Rx. The dewe.	D: What is the broadest water that is the least dangerous to cross over? Rx. The dew.
13	Demaunde. What thynges is it that the more that one drynketh ye lesse he shall pysse. Rx. It is fartes & fyestes for Who that drynketh a hondreth thousande they shall neuer pysse a droppe.	D: What thing is it, that the more you drink deeply, the less you need to piss? Rx. Farts and bad smells; even if you drink in a hundred thousand, you won't piss a drop.
14	Demaunde. What thyng is it that neuer was nor neuer shall be. Rx. Neuer mouse made her nest in a cattes ere.	D: What thing never was, and never will be? Rx. A mouse nest in a cat's ear.
15	Demaunde. Why dryue men dogges out of the chyrche. Rx. Bycause they come not vp and offre.	D: Why do men drive dogs out of the church? Rx. Because they never pay offerings.
16	Demaunde. Why come dogges so often to the chyrche. Rx. Bycause whan they se the aulters couered they wene theyr maysters goo thyder to dyner.	D: Why do dogs so often come into the church? Rx. Because when they see the alters covered in cloths, they think their masters are going there to have dinner.
17	Demaunde. Why dooth a dogge thourne hym thryes aboute or ye he lyeth hym downe. Rx. Bycause he knoweth not his beddes hede frome the fete.	D: Why does a dog turn around three times before lying down? Rx. Because it doesn't know which end of its bed is the head or the foot.
18	Demaunde. Why doo men make an ouen in the towne. Rx. For bycause they can not make the	D: Why do men make an oven in the town? Rx. Because they can't make a town in

	towne in the ouen.	the oven.
19	Demaunde. What beest is it that hath her taylor bytwene her eyen. Rx. It is a catte whan she lycketh her arse.	D: What animal has its tail between its eyes? Rx. A cat when its licks its arse.
20	Demaunde. Whiche is the moost cleynelyest lefe amonge all other leues. Rx. It is holly leues for noo body wyll not wype his arse with them.	D: What is the cleanest leaf amongst all the leaves? Rx. Holly leaves, because nobody will wipe their arse with them.
21	Demaunde. Who was he that lete the fyrst farte at rome. Rx. That was the arse.	D: Who let loose the first fart in Rome? Rx. An arse.
22	Demaunde. How may a man knowe or perceyue a cowe in a flocke of shepe. Rx. By syghte.	D: How may a man know or perceive a cow in a flock of sheep? Rx. By sight.
23	Demaunde. What thyng is it that hathe hornes at the arse. Rx. It is a sacke.	D: What has horns in its arse? Rx. A sack.
24	Demaunde. What almes is worst bestowed that men gyue. Rx. That is to a blynde man for as he hathe ony thyng gyuen hym he wolde with good wyll se hym hanged by the necke that gaue it hym.	D: What charity is the worst bestowed that a man could give? Rx. Alms to a blind man, for he would give anything to see his benefactor hanged.
25	Demaunde. Wherefore set the vpon chyrche steples more a cocke than a henne. Rx. Yf men sholde sette there a henne seh wolde laye egges and tehy wolde fall vpon mennes hedes.	D: Why do we put roosters on church steeples and not hens? Rx. If we put hens up there, they'd lay eggs which would fall on our heads.
26	Demaunde. What thyng is it that hathe none ende.	D: What thing has no end?

	Rx. A bowle.	Rx. A ball/a bowl. ⁴
27	Demaunde. What wode is it that ne reste vpon. Rx. The claper of a lazars dysshe.	D: What wood is it that is never rested on? Rx. The clapper of a lepers dish
28	Demaunde. How wolde ye saye two pater nosters for your frendes soule and god neuer made but one pater noster. Rx. Saye one two tymes.	D: How would you say two prayers for your friend's soul, when God only wrote one Pater Noster? Rx. Say it twice.
29	Demaunde. Whiche ben the moost profytable sayntes in the chyrche. Rx. They that stonde in ye glasse wyndowes for they kepe out ye wynde for wastynge of the lyght.	D: Who are the most useful saints in the church? Rx. The ones in the stained glass windows; they keep wind out and let the light in.
30	Demaunde. What people be they ye neuer go a processyon. Rx. They be those that rynge ye belles ein ye meane season.	D: Which people never go in a procession? Rx. The ones that ring the bells to tell people of them. ⁵
31	Demaunde. What is it ye freseth neuer. Rx. That is hote water.	D: What never freezes? Rx. Hot water.
32	Demaunde. What thyng is that yt is moost lykest vnto a hors. Rx. That is a mare.	D: What thing is most like a horse? Rx. A mare.
33	Demaunde. Wherefore be there not as many women conteyned in ye daunce of poules as there be men. Rx. By cause a women is so ferefull of herte that she had leuer daunce amonge	D: Why are there not as many women in the dance of poles as there are men? Rx. Because a woman is so fearful of heart that she would rather dance among the living than the dead. ⁶

⁴ Both ball and bowl have been spelled as "bowle" at this time, and the riddle works equally well for either.

⁵ This is an example of where the change in language makes the sense difficult: a more accurate modern wording is "those who ring the bells to give meaning to the season". Religious processions take place on holy days, which are announced by bell ringing. A more modern reworking would be something like "Who never takes part in Midnight Mass? The Christmas Bellringers".

	quycke folke than deed.	
34	<p>Demaunde. Whiche is the clenlyest occupacyon that is.</p> <p>Rx. That is a dauber for he may neyther shyte nor ete tyll he hath wasshed his handes.</p>	<p>D: Which is the cleanliest occupation there is?</p> <p>Rx. A dauber for he may neither shit nor eat until he washes his hands.⁷</p>
35	<p>Demaunde. What daye in the yere ben the flyes moost aferde.</p> <p>Rx. That is on palme sonday whan they se euery body haue an handeful of palme in theyr hande they wene it is to kyll theym.</p>	<p>D: What day of the year are flies most afraid?</p> <p>Rx. Palm Sunday, when they see everybody has a handful of palms with which to swat and kill them.</p>
36	<p>Demaunde. What tyme of the yere may maydens moost with theyr honeste fyest in the chyrche.</p> <p>Rx. In lent season for than euery sayntes nose and face is couered so that they smell no thyng</p>	<p>D: What time of the year may maidens most honestly fart in church?</p> <p>Rx. During Lent, when the saints' noses and faces are covered (with cloth) and they can't smell anything.</p>
37	<p>Demaunde. What thyng is it the lesse it is the more it is dredde.</p> <p>Rx. A brydge.</p>	<p>D: What is more frightening the less there is of it?</p> <p>Rx. A bridge.</p>
38	<p>Demaunde. Wherefore is it that yonge chyl dren wepe as soone as euer they ben borne.</p> <p>Rx. Bycause theyr moder is noo more mayden.</p>	<p>D: Why do young children weep as soon as they are born?</p> <p>Rx. Because their mothers are no more maidens.</p>

⁶ This is another joke I haven't managed to work out. The closest I can come is that it possibly relates to something like a Morris dance, i.e. a dance involving batons or poles, with the idea that women are too afraid of being hurt to dance.

⁷ A dauber is a person who makes wattle and daub walls, which involves packing mud and straw into the frame of the wall.

39	<p>Demaunde. Wherefore is it that an asse hathe so grete eyres.</p> <p>Rx. Bycause het moder put no begyn on her heed in her yought.</p>	<p>D: Why does an ass have such great ears?</p> <p>Rx. Because her mother never put a bonnet on her head when she was young.</p>
40	<p>Demaunde. What is it that is a wryte and is no man and he do the that no man can and yet it serueth bothe god and man.</p> <p>Rx. That is a be.</p>	<p>D: What is it that is a wright and is not a man, and can do what no man can, yet it serves both god and man?</p> <p>Rx. A bee.⁸</p>
41	<p>Demaunde. Whiche was fyrst ye henne or ye egge.</p> <p>Rx. The henne whan god made her.</p>	<p>D...Which came first, the chicken or the egg?</p> <p>Rx. The chicken, when god made her.</p>
42	<p>Demaunde. Why dothe an oxe or a cowe lye.</p> <p>Rx. Bycause she can not sytte.</p>	<p>D: Why do cows and oxen lie down?</p> <p>Rx. Because they cannot sit.</p>
43	<p>Demaunde. What people be they that loue not in no wyse to be prayed for.</p> <p>Rx. They be beggars & poore people whan men say god helpe them whan they aske almes.</p>	<p>D: Which people do not love in any way to be prayed for?</p> <p>Rx. The beggars and poor people, when men say god help them when they ask for alms.⁹</p>
44	<p>Demaunde. How many strawes go to a gose nest.</p> <p>Rx. None for lacke of fete.</p>	<p>D: How many straws go to a goose's nest?</p> <p>Rx. None, straw hasn't got feet.</p>
45	<p>Demaunde. What tyme in the yere bereth a gose moost feders.</p> <p>Rx. Whan the gander is upon her backe.</p>	<p>D: What time of year does a goose bear the most feathers?</p> <p>Rx. When the gander is on her back.</p>

⁸ A wright is a maker of things (c.f. wheelwright, cartwright). By making honey (to eat) and wax (to make candles) the bee is serving god and people.

⁹ In other words, beggars are not happy when people pray for them, rather than helping them in more physical ways.

46	<p>Demaunde. What was he that slewe the fourth parte of the worlde.</p> <p>Rx. Cayne whan that he slewe his broder Abell in the whiche tyme was but foure persones in the worlde.</p>	<p>D: Who slew one quarter of the world?</p> <p>Rx. Cain, when he slew Abel; at that time there were only four people in the world.</p>
47	<p>Demaunde. What was he that was begoten or his fader and borne or his moder and had the maydenhede of his beldame.</p> <p>Rx. That was Abell</p>	<p>D: Who was begotten by his father, and borne of his mother, but had his mother's maidenhead?</p> <p>Rx. Abel.¹⁰</p>
48	<p>Demaunde. What thre thynges be they that the worlde is moost mayntened by.</p> <p>Rx. That is to were by wordes erbes and stones. Why with wordes man worshyppeth god and as of erbes that is all maner of corne that man is fedde with and as stones one is that gryndeth the corne and the other encreaseth the worlde.</p>	<p>D: What three things is the world most maintained by?</p> <p>Rx. Words, herbs and stones. With words, man worships god, and it is from herbs that all manner of grains comes to feed men, and as for stones, one sort you grind grain with, the other sort increases the world.¹¹</p>
49	<p>Demaunde. What is ye aeg of a felde mous.</p> <p>Rx. A yere. And a hedge may stande thre mous lyues and the lyfe of a dogge is the terme of thre hedges standynge & the lyfe of a hors is thre dogges lyues and the lyfe of a man is thre hors lyues and the lyfe of a gose is thre mennes lyues and ye lyfe of a swanns and the lyfe of a</p>	<p>D: What is the age of a field mouse?</p> <p>Rx. One year. And a hedgehog may stand for three mouse lives, and the life of a dog is three times that of a hedgehog, and the life of a horse is three dogs' lives, and the life of a man is three horses' lives, and the life of a (wild) goose is three men's lives, as is a swan's life, and the life of a swallow is three</p>

¹⁰ The theology of this is debatable: there is no church doctrine that Eve retained her virginity after marrying Adam. It is possible that this is a bowdlerised joke, and that the original answer was Jesus, but it was deemed too profane an answer. Otherwise, it is possible that there was an idea that Abel was conceived before Adam and Eve committed the original sin of eating the fruit of knowledge, with the common misconception that original sin = sex.

¹¹ Stones = testicles.

	<p>swalowe is thre swanne lyues and the lyfe of an egle is thre swalowes lyues and the lyfe of a serpent is thre egles lyues and the lyfe of a rauē is thre serpentē lyues and the lyfe of a harte is thre rauens lyues and an oke groweth v hondreth yere and it standeth in one state fyue hondreth yere and it fadeth fyue hondreth yere besyde the rote why the doubleth thre tymes eueryche of the thre aeges a foresayd.</p>	<p>swans' lives, and the life of an eagle is three swallows' lives, and the life of a serpent is is three eagles' lives, and the life of a raven is three serpent's lives, and the life of a hart is three ravens' lives, and an oak grows for five hundred years, and it stands for five hundred years, and then it dies for five hundred years.¹²</p>
50	<p>Demaunde. A man had thre doughters of thre aeges whiche doughters he delyuered to sell certayne apples and he toke to the eldest doughter L apples and to the seconde xxx apples and to the yongest ten apples and all these thre solde in lyke many for a peny and brought home in lyke moche money now how many solde eche of them for a peny.</p> <p>Rx. The yongest solde fyrst seuen for a peny and the other two systers solde after the same pryce than ye eldest syster had one odde apple lefte and the seconde syster two and the yongest thrs</p>	<p>D: A man had three daughters of three different ages. He ordered his daughters to sell apples, and he gave the eldest fifty apples, the second he gave thirty apples and the youngest he gave ten apples. All three sold their apples at the same price, and all three brought home the same amount of money; how did they do that?</p> <p>Rx. The youngest sold seven apples for one penny. Her sisters said they would price their apples the same; the eldest sold 49 apples for seven pennies, and the second sister sold 28 apples for fourpence. So the eldest sister still had one apple, the second sister now had</p>

¹² I have no idea what this is based on. The results, by the way, are as follows:

Field mouse = 1 year
Hedgehog = 3 years
Dog = 9 years
Horse = 27 years
Man = 81 years
Wild goose = 243 years
Swan = 243 years
Swallow = 729 years
Eagle = 2,187 years
Serpent = 6,561 years
Raven = 19, 683 years
Hart = 59, 049 years

	apples now these apples lyked the byer soo well that in contynent he came agayne to the yongest systre and bought of her thre apples after thre pens a pece than had she ten pens and the secon be thoughte she wolde kepe the same pryce and solde her two apples for thre pens a pece and than had she ten pens & ye eldest solde her one apple for thre pens & than had she ten pens thus solde they in lyke many apples for a peny and broughte home in lyke moche money.	two and the youngest sister had three apples. Now the buyer liked the apples so much, he was willing to pay the youngest sister three pennies per apple, so she sold her remaining three apples for nine pence, and had ten pence in total. Her sisters decided to do the same with their remaining apples, and so the middle sister sold her two apples for sixpence and had ten pennies in total, and the oldest sister sold her last apple for threppence, giving her ten pence in total. Thus they sold their apples for the same price, and each sister came home with the same money. ¹³
51	Demaunde. what man is he that geteth his lyuyng bacwarde. Rx. That is rope maker.	D: What man gets his living backwards? Rx. The ropemaker. ¹⁴
52	Demaunde. What people be the that geteth theyr lyuyng moost merylyest. Rx. Tho be prestes & fullers for one syngeth and the other daunceth.	D: What people make their living most merrily? Rx. The priest and the fuller, for one sings and the other dances. ¹⁵
53	Demaunde. What is he that made all and solde all & he ye bought all loste all Rx. A smyth made an alle and solde it and the shomaker ye bought it lost it.	D: Who made all and sold all, and who bought all and lost all? Rx. A smith made an awl and sold it, and the shoemaker who bought it, lost it.

¹³ This is a pure mathematical logic puzzle. If you are struggling to visualise the maths:

	Eldest	Middle	Youngest
7 apples for 1p:	49 apples / 7 = 7p	28 apples / 7 = 4p	7 apples / 7 = 1p
1 apple for 3 p	50-49 = 1 left 1 apple x 3 = 3p	30-28 = 2 left 2 apples x 3 = 6p	10-7 = 3 left 3 apples x 3 = 9p
Totals:	7p + 3p = 10p	4p + 6p = 10p	1p + 9p = 10p

¹⁴ Ropemakers walk backwards when twisting the ropes.

¹⁵ To full a length of woollen cloth, it is rolled up, and then beaten against a bench; the fullers leap in order to do so, using their torsos to pull and push the heavy roll.

54	Demaunde. Whether is it bett to lyue by thefte or by almes dedes.	D: Is it better to live by theft or by begging (alms done)?
	Rx. The rewarde of thefte is to behanged and yf thou lyue by almes dedes that is by beggars tordes.	Rx. The reward of theft is to be hanged, and if you live by alms done that is by beggars turds. ¹⁶



Baroness Jehanne de Finistiere and her son at Saturnalia,
By Baroness Adelindis filia Gotefridi

¹⁶ This one really has me stumped, because I can't find a satisfactory way of translating this to modern English in a way that makes sense. "Dedes" is the past tense of "to do", but is also a synonym with "dead". Almes-dedes, that is alms-done, refers to begging, with overtones of not entirely honest begging (i.e. someone who is capable of working, but fakes disability in order to beg for money). "Tordes" means both "towards" and "turd". So the meaning is essentially, is it better to steal, or to beg – stealing gets you hung, and begging when you are fit makes you a collector of turds, with a whole lot of wordplay and double meaning relating to destiny and death going on, that simply doesn't work in modern English.

How Can Cockatrice Do Better?: Survey Analysis

Lady Gwen verch David

Cockatrice has been published, on and off, for more than thirty years. Each editor has interpreted the remit of the journal differently, but it has always been a publication focused on the Arts and Sciences in Lochac. I took up the mantle of editor in January this year, and discovered over the next two editions that I was struggling to recruit enough contributors for a full issue. (Where ‘full’ was defined by the average length over the last five years: five articles.) To me, this indicated a problem: why was Lochac’s large and active A&S community not interested in writing for Cockatrice?

As it was early in my time as editor, I also decided to ask other questions. Who reads Cockatrice? What was valued about the publication, and what could be improved? All of these questions, I posed in an online survey, publicised on Facebook, through the main Lochac mailing list, and in the May AS 53 edition. The survey was open for three months, and collected sixty-two responses.

Summary of Results¹⁷

Section 1: Demographics

- Respondents ranged from less than a year in the SCA (3 out of 62) to over a decade (42 out of 62)
- There was no strong geographical bias among respondents, with representatives from across Lochac (and two from other kingdoms).
- The majority of respondents said that they were strongly interested in A&S.

Section 2: Readership

- 40% of respondents had heard about Cockatrice by word of mouth; an additional 30% through mailing lists or social media. Only 10% said they had discovered Cockatrice on an official Lochac website.
- Respondents’ knowledge of Cockatrice dated from less than one year ago (9 out of 62) to more than ten years ago (31 out of 62).
- Respondents included new readers and non-readers of Cockatrice as well as those who read it regularly. The largest group (19 out of 62) were those who read each edition as it comes out; only 8 people said they reread past issues.

¹⁷ See appendix for full details.

- Respondents were close to equally split between subscribers (34 out of 62) and non-subscribers (28 out of 62).

Section 3: Content

- Respondents were generally positive about the types of content currently published in Cockatrice (scholarly research articles; experimental research articles; project reports; recipe redactions; and poetry and artistic works). Of the five options, poetry and artistic works were least popular, but it was by a small margin, and respondents remained, on the whole, positive about those works.
- I asked about eight new types of content: book reviews; project photos; short, informal A&S stories; artisan profiles; letters to the editor; reports on A&S classes/displays/events; competition documentation; and class handouts. For the most part, respondents were strongly positive about each option; however, they were more neutral about artisan profiles and letters to the editor.
- When asked to suggest other ideas for Cockatrice content, slightly under half of respondents (25 of 62) had something to say. There were three ‘clusters’ of responses: requests for an online/blog format (6 out of 62); requests for links to other online content (7 out of 62); and requests for practical how-to articles and advice columns (5 out of 62).

Section 4: Authorship

- The majority of respondents (44 out of 62) had never submitted content to Cockatrice. Only 3 had submitted content more than once.
- When asked why they had submitted content in the past, the main clusters of response were ‘to share knowledge or information with others’ (8 out of 18 authors) and ‘because [they] thought people would be interested’ (3 out of 18 authors).
- When asked why they had *not* submitted content, the main clusters of response were ‘not skilled/experienced enough’ (13 of 44 non-authors); and ‘thought people wouldn’t be interested’ (6 out of 44 non-authors). Only a quarter of non-authors stated no interest in submitting to Cockatrice; the remainder were new readers, felt otherwise unable to write something suitable, or did not give a reason.
- Respondents indicated that of the main types of article currently published in Cockatrice, they were most likely to submit project reports, and least likely to submit poetry or artistic works.
- There were no strong trends when respondents were asked which of eight new types of content they were likely to submit in future, but class handouts and project photos were overall most likely, with artisan profiles and letters to the editor least likely.

- When asked about additional ways they could share their story in Cockatrice, 5 people suggested social media (5 out of 62) 3 suggested youtube. The majority of respondents (46 out of 62) did not answer this question.

Section 5: General

- Offered the opportunity to share additional feedback, 5 people emphasized their desire for an online/blog format, and 3 commented that Cockatrice was not well known enough. The largest cluster of comments (12 out of 62) were supportive of the publication as-is, and 38 out of 62 did not respond to this question.

Discussion

Up-front, I want to point out the issue of sample size. Lochac has over a fifteen hundred inhabitants; a survey of sixty people (less than 4% of the population) is fairly small. The representation of Cockatrice subscribers was better, with 11% of our subscribers answering the survey, but those numbers are still barely large enough to be statistically significant. The participants were also self-selected, from those who were already engaged with Lochac's online presence. Clearly, these results can't be guaranteed to be a representative selection of our populace.

However, they do represent a *range* of perspectives that exist within Lochac.. The results from sections 1 and 2 are clear that respondents were diverse in their location, SCA experience, and past engagement with Cockatrice. While we can't rely on trends in the numerical data, we can at least expect the written responses to express *some* of the different experiences people have had with Cockatrice.

Awareness of the Publication

Multiple respondents had never heard of Cockatrice before coming across the survey, and more than one person commented that awareness among newcomers was low. Length of time since hearing about Cockatrice was, on average, somewhat lower than length of time in the SCA. It's difficult to say from a single survey how much this is an issue in the present moment, and how much it reflects ongoing trouble with visibility.

Areas of Reader Interest

In general, respondents were positive about the publication and its content, but also open to new types of article. A somewhat higher value was placed on practical articles than theoretical ones, which came through in both numerical data and written comments. Regardless of type of article, there was interest in how the information could be applied by the reader to their own work.

Several commenters requested that articles include (or feature) websites and sources to follow up. These suggestions ranged from recommended links lists, to reviews of specific key sites, to round-ups of tips and discussions across media. In other parts of the survey, respondents suggested greater engagement with Youtube and social media platforms. On the whole, I believe these results reflect the greater engagement our populace now has with online sources, communities, and communication platforms, and their expectation that Cockatrice should reflect that change over time.

Online Format

In two different questions (Q9, Section 3; Q17, Section 5), respondents had an opportunity to give general feedback about Cockatrice, and in both cases, multiple people requested a change to a website or blog format. Reasons cited included ability to search the newsletter contents, optimization for mobile browsing, and the potential for more frequent publication.

Barriers to Participation

When I wrote this survey, I hoped to discover *why* people write for Cockatrice, and why so many of them don't. What was a little surprising to me in the results was just how many people are interested in submitting content, but feel unable – almost half of the non-authors. Comments such as “I'm not good enough at anything”, “I don't feel that I have done anything that is worth talking about”, and “I am not very confident and don't wished to be judged” were common, and to me indicate the presence of an underlying cultural issue. The people who made these comments included long-term readers, with more than a decade of SCA experience and a strong interest in A&S; nonetheless, they felt their work was not valuable by the standards of the publication. Whether this reflects deliberate editorial agendas or unintentional audience perceptions, this survey is unable to say.

Conclusion

On the whole, Cockatrice is doing well. However, this survey also raised areas for possible improvement:

- Greater visibility
- Broader range of content (including more articles with a practical focus, and articles helping readers navigate online resources)
- Making articles available in a blog/webpage format
- Creating a more welcoming culture for new contributors

In many ways, these areas feed into each other. Blog-style publication may increase visibility; increased visibility may increase the contributor pool. A wider range of content, including more practical articles, might be more appealing to new members, increasing the number of word-of-mouth recommendations. The less formal appearance of a blog may encourage confidence among inexperienced authors.

However, suggested changes were not the only finding of this survey. Many people feel very positive about the current publication, its format, and its content. Our readers include people who have been with the publication since its inception, some of whom have been part of past editorial teams. At present, Lochac is the only kingdom with a regular A&S publication, and Cockatrice's continued existence is something editors, authors, and readers should be proud of. Whatever its visibility issues may be, Cockatrice reaches across Lochac and even outside of it, and its subscriber base is close to 20% of the Lochac population. Does it really need to change?

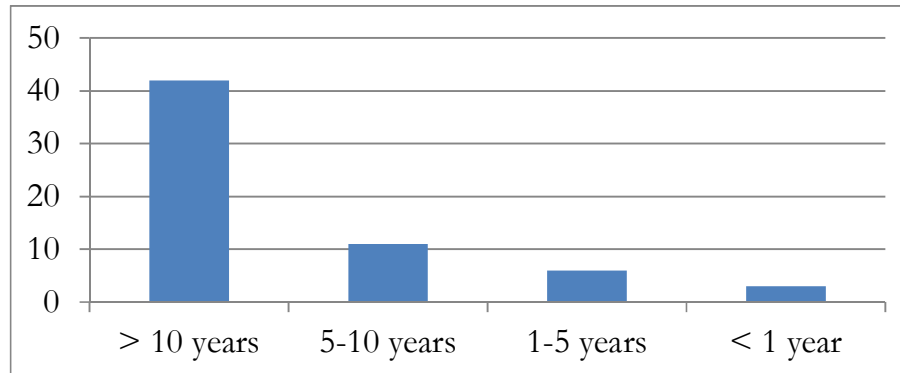
Maybe not. But the world *around* Cockatrice is changing. More and more, people are engaging with their SCA communities through social media, with large quasi-official Facebook groups like the 'Lochac A&S Discussion and Showcase'. We've moved from home computers to laptops to smartphones that can keep us updated anywhere we go. News travels so fast that people in Aneala can track the progress of a tournament in Southron Gaard in real-time, and the outcome can be generally known within a day. A quarterly periodical is dramatically slower than the pace by which we regularly share our achievements and discoveries using other available tools.

This survey does not answer the question 'how should Cockatrice change?'. But as editor, I find that it offers greater insight into the people Cockatrice might change *for* – our readers – and I hope to benefit from that insight as Cockatrice moves into the future.

Appendix: Results

Section 1: Demographics

1: How long have you been in the SCA?

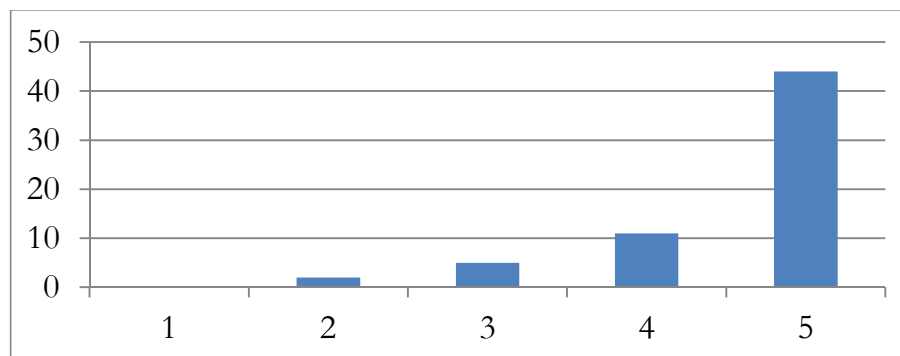


> 10 years	42
5-10 years	11
1-5 years	6
< 1 year	3

2: What SCA group do you belong to?

Adora	1
Aneala	3
Bordescros	2
Darton	4
Ildhafn	1
Innilgard	3
Krae Glas	3
Mordenvale	6
Politarchopolis	8
River Haven	5
Rowany	6
Saint Florian de la Riviere	3
Southron Gaard	8
Ynys Fawr	6
Non-Lochac	2

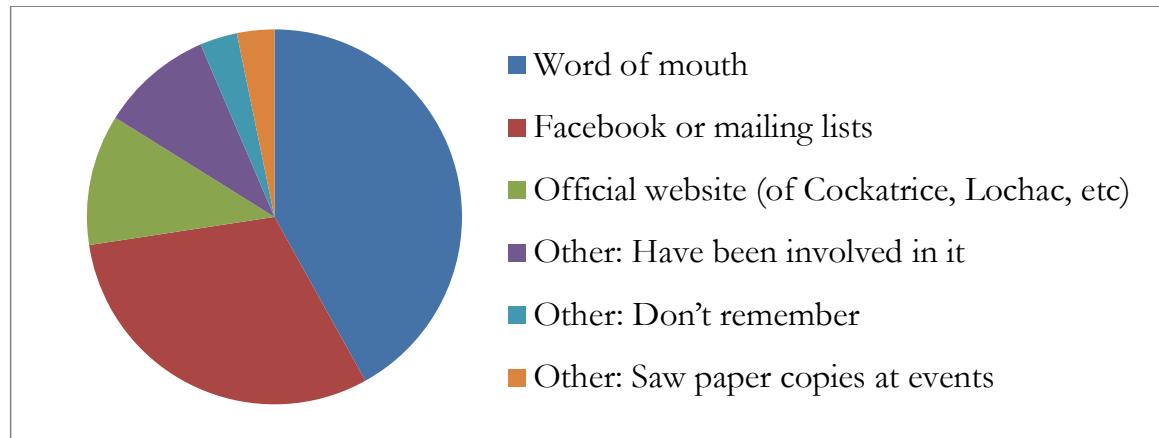
3: How interested are you in the Arts and Sciences?



1 (least interested)	0
2	2
3	5
4	11
5 (most interested)	44

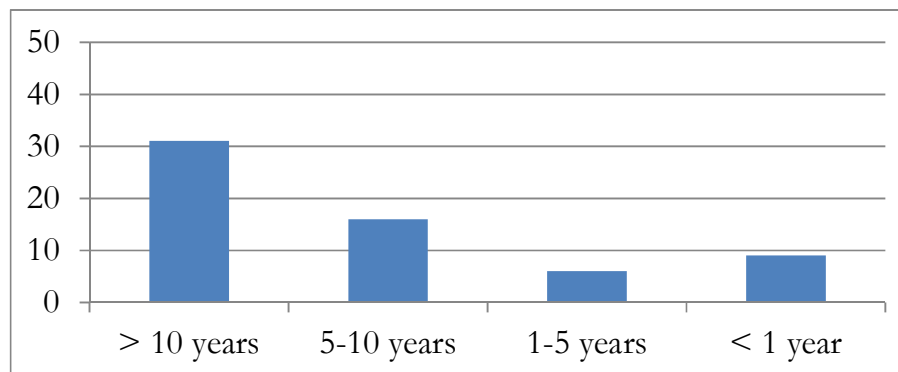
Section 2: Readership

4: How did you hear about Cockatrice?

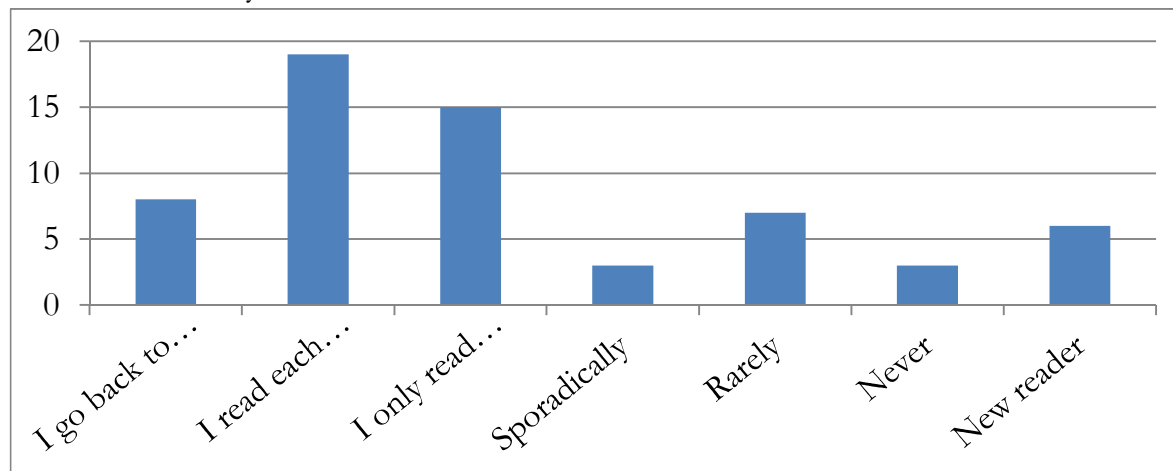


Word of mouth	26	41.9%
Facebook or mailing lists	19	30.6%
Official website (of Cockatrice, Lochac, etc)	7	11.2%
Other: Have been involved in it	6	9.6%
Other: Don't remember	2	3.2%
Other: Saw paper copies at events	2	3.2%

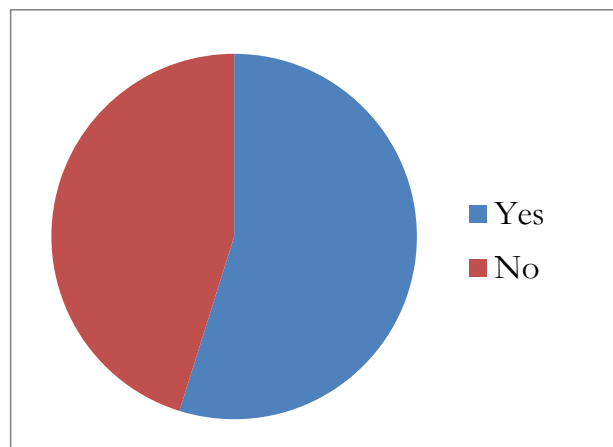
5: How long have you known about Cockatrice?



> 10 years	31
5-10 years	16
1-5 years	6
< 1 year	9

6: How often do you read Cockatrice?

I go back to previous editions to reread them	8
I read each edition as it comes out	19
I only read Cockatrice when there's an article that interests me	15
Sporadically	3
Rarely	7
Never	3
New reader	6

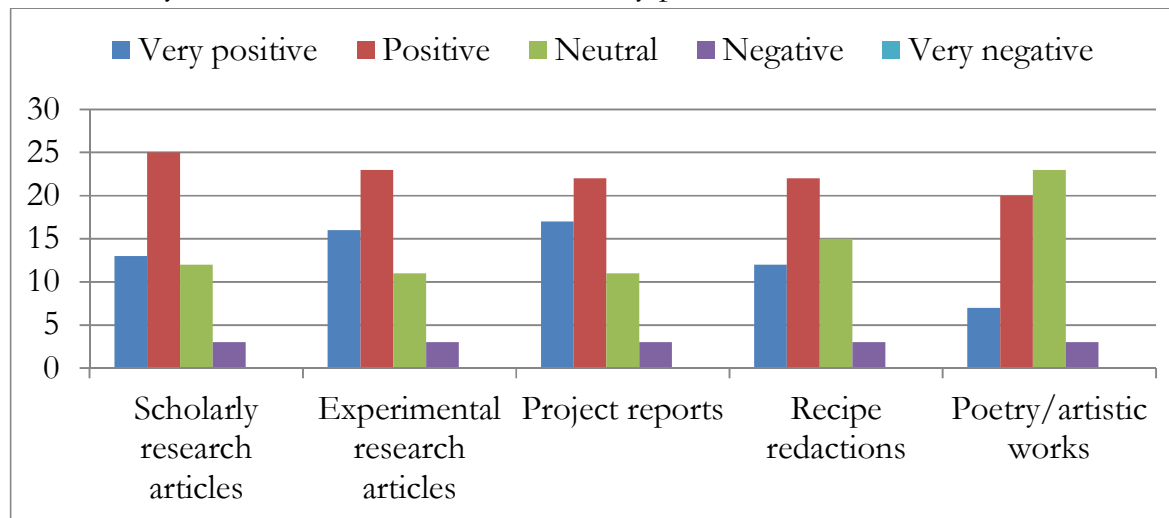
7: Are you subscribed to Cockatrice?

Yes	34*	54.8%
No	28	45.2%

*Note: Cockatrice has 307 subscribers in total

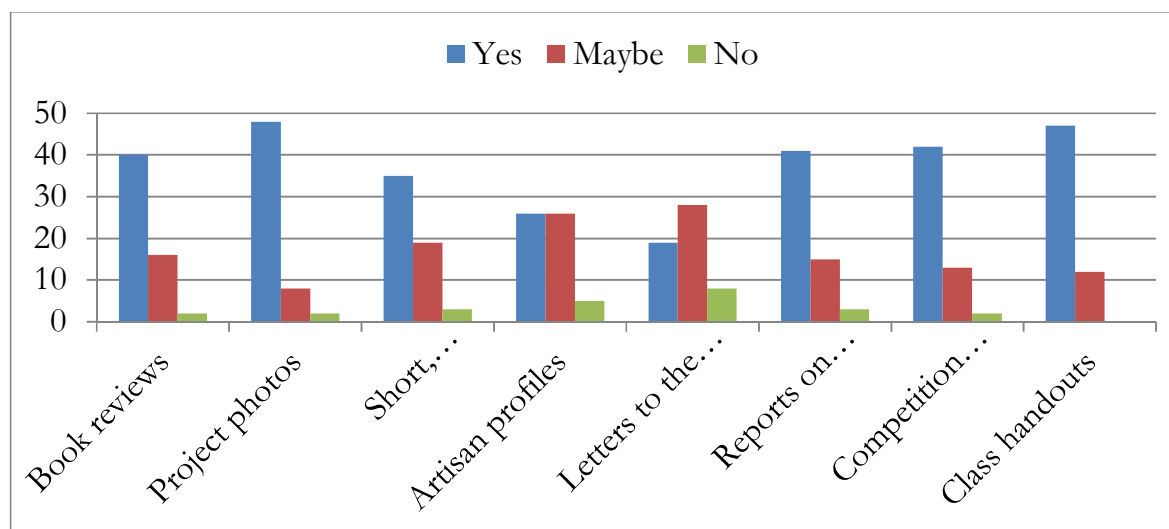
Section 3: Content

8: How do you feel about the content currently published in Cockatrice?



	Scholarly research articles	Experimental research articles	Project reports	Recipe redactions	Poetry/artistic works
Very positive	13	16	17	12	7
Positive	25	23	22	22	20
Neutral	12	11	11	15	23
Negative	3	3	3	3	3
Very negative	0	0	0	0	0

9: What new types of content would you like to see in Cockatrice?



	Yes	Maybe	No
Book reviews	40	16	2
Project photos	48	8	2
Short, informal A&S stories	35	19	3
Artisan profiles	26	26	5
Letters to the editor	19	28	8
Reports on A&S classes/displays/events	41	15	3
Competition documentation	42	13	2
Class handouts	47	12	0

10: What else would you like to see in Cockatrice?

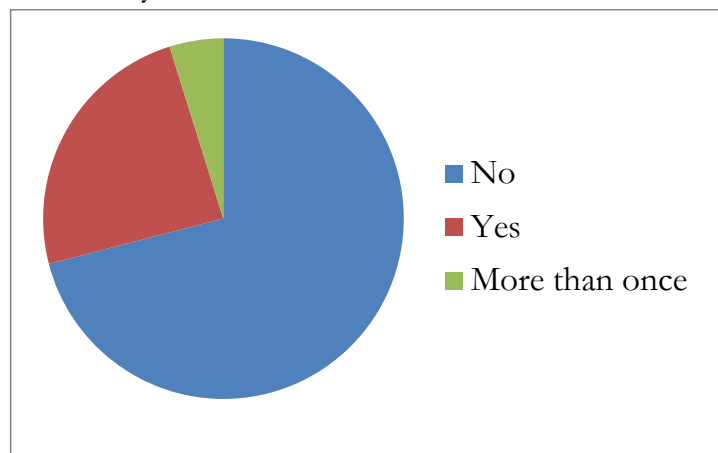
No response	33	
No particular requests	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of the new suggestions sound fab! • I generally like how it is now, and wouldn't mind more of (roughly) the same • I'm open to anything A&S. If it is there and the topic doesn't interest me I can skip it • The above are great suggestions
Blog/online format	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A blog makes it much more accessible across a range of devices and wherever you are, plus is searchable for specific topics. Can be categorised for different skills or topics. Easier to publish to and layout, plus free! Get with the 21st century! • Blog format. I mostly do my web browsing on a smart phone and I hate reading PDFs on it • I would very much like to see it converted to a more accessible format, such as a curated blog. Preserving the high quality of content is definitely desirable, but I see little benefit in this day and age to an episodic quasi-print publication format. • Please goto a blog format with a more regular content distribution • searchable webpage where we can browse related topics for inspiration • The entire thing in a blog format would be handy, then we could google the content more easily (ie at all). "Scholarly" articles should be cited and well researched, but written in Plain English, not academese.
Links to other online content	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A roundup of tips or pointers to interesting discussions on various media might be good. Though I think keeping content very moderated and at high standard is good - I really liked the

		<p>quality of content in the edition I've just read. We drown in information most of the time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articles that contain good trusted links and resources for certain topics, such as Viking or Elizabethan or starter recipes. That type of thing, it would be a good resource to point newcomers to without everyone having to reinvent the wheel, especially if its an area not well known in the local group. • Each issue could have an internet section which does a profile on a useful website and/or facebook page. ie Larsdatter, foligium, woodworkers page, etc • Inspiration pieces with pictures and references to start chasing them up • Links or short showcases of recommended blogs, Youtube/other channels, websites etc (member-run or otherwise) • Links to further information on the subject/s in the current issue • Lots of photos and links to follow up
How-to articles and advice	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hints, tips and advice column • I would like to see a string focus on what can be done with the information presented. It is all well and good to know about an item but if it cannot be applied to a practical purpose then it really isn't as effective to the SCA as it should be • How to for basic garb as well as advanced techniques eg how to have a complete outfit in a particular period • More practical how to articals • Music, and "stuff to try at home" and stories.
Other	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term projects - how things are progressing through the year. It would also be interesting to see someone go back to something they wrote years ago, to give a review on their own article, based on their current knowledge and experience. A Laurel presence would be good. Cockatrice is one of the few places to publish indepth research short of a personal blog, but there is no real sense that the Laurel's actually read it. Maybe just a "Laurel of the Month" profile? And I would really love to see all the issues available on the web. I know Drakey scanned all of the print editions at one point to allow that to happen. • Regular pages sponsored by Guilds, music, • Social media page, maybe a guild for the authors?

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upcoming A&S calendar. Current and reliable contact details of A&S officers. Bibliography collections on topics. Material supplier reviews. Reliable online shop details. Game details. Interesting encampment ideas. • Variety and support. • A&S from all over the Southern and Eastern SCA groups • Contacts for different artisans who are willing to be listed.
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Section 4: Authorship

11: Have you ever submitted content to Cockatrice?



No	44	71%
Yes	15	24.2%
More than once	3	4.8%

12: If so, why?

N/A	44	
No response	1	
To share research/knowledge with others	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because I wanted to share my research. • Recipe redactions that seemed interesting to share • Share research • Sharing with like minded individuals. • to share the information I'd found • Trying to get knowledge out there, in an accessible format, that doesn't require me to host my own website. • I saw a shortfall in heraldic knowledge, that wasn't intuitively easy to find online. • Because I like doing research and writing it up, and it's nice to share it with others. Also it means I have more incentive to finish things.
Thought	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thought people might be interested in the description and

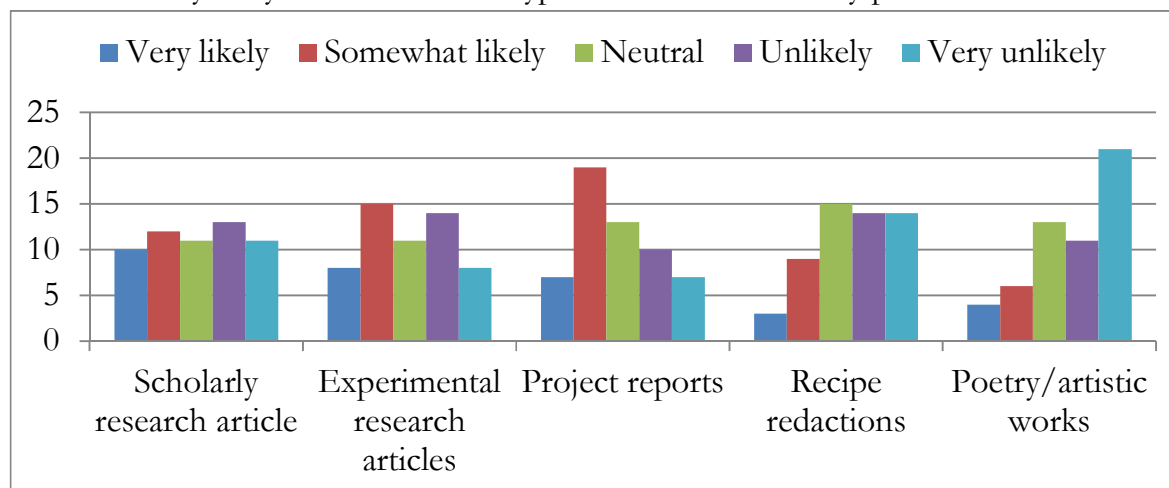
people would be interested		<p>follow up work from some experimental archaeology at conducted at Rowany Festival</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I enjoy reading Cockatrice, and I hope that people find my research interesting as well. I also find that writing things up helps me be complete and careful in my research. Finally, I'm a real-world academic so I'm used to publishing whatever I do. • I thought it was a topic worth submitting an article about.
Other	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because I wanted to. • BecuSe it was hownit was done back in the day • Was asked to do so. • My leer told me to. Our A&S officer said I should. Because it's a good thing to do. Because I like sharing information. Because it builds the association of my persona with a field of interest that people may know and approach me. Because it might help get a Laurel for Christus Sakus! • Becuse it needed content and I used to be on the editorial team when it was still printed • Helped do some editing of articles for it a number of years ago.

13: If not, why not?

N/A	18	
No response	6	
Interested, but - Not skilled/ experienced enough	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Haven't developed my skill to be good enough to showcase • I don't feel I have enough experience. • I don't feel I have unique skills or knowledge to share. • I don't feel like I'm at a high enough level of skill • I'm not good enough at anything. • I've only just started reading, but will certainly contribute once my skills are of sufficient standard. • I intend to submit several times this coming year. It is important to me to have my writing up to scratch. • Never been good at A&S • Not confident my writing would be good enough • not enough experience on one subject • Not enough knowledge to contribute or time spent on writings to acceptable quality. • Only starting out down the documentation path for items

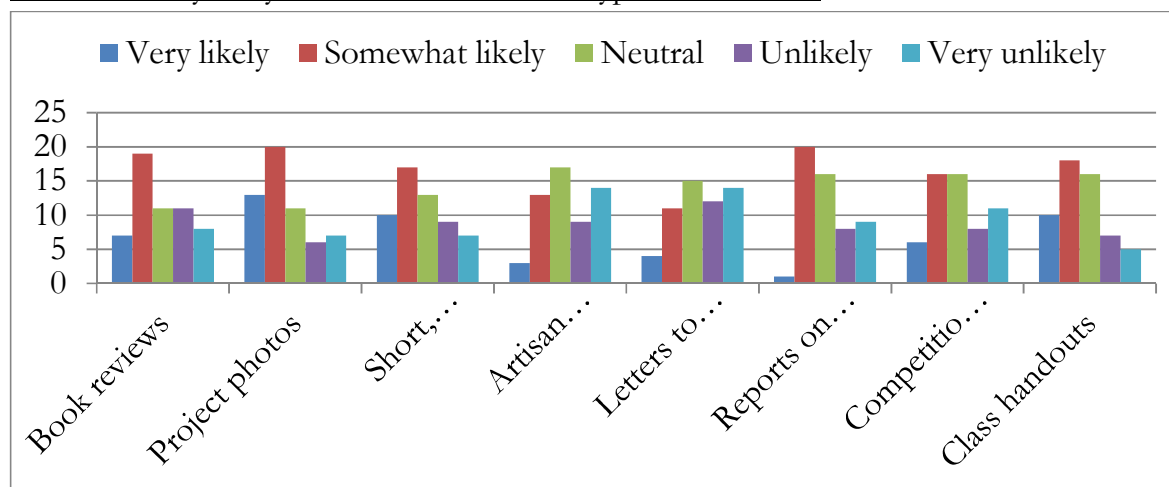
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working on it but don't feel I have done something worthy of inclusion
Interested, but - People wouldn't want to read it	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because I don't know if anyone would be interested in what I would write • I don't feel that I have done anything that is worth talking about, it isn't new or a novel approach. • I don't think people are interested in what I can offer - if someone asked specifically I would • Not currently working on anything that I think would make a good article • Not sure if what i had thought about submitting would be of interest • Nothing worth submitting
Interested, but - Other	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's more than just a little intimidating!! • Not sure how to • I don't know the audience and scope of writing • I am not very confident and don't wish to be judged
New to Cockatrice	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Didn't know it existed until recently. • Don't really have access or read • Publication heretofore has been unknown to me. Might be interested in future. • Would like to, but didn't know about Cockatrice until now
Not interested – Publishes elsewhere	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I publish and promote my own work via blog • I have tended to publish in blogs or websites I've controlled or that I regularly read. • My writings are over the length friends
Not interested – Too busy	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's not top of mind, and I am very busy. Not motivated. • No time • No Time and not my focus
Not interested - Other	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't do documentation. • I have not produced any research • I haven't thought about it • Not crafty • I'm not an artisan or a researcher

14: How likely are you to submit the types of content currently published in Cockatrice?



	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Neutral	Unlikely	Very unlikely
Scholarly research article	10	12	11	13	11
Experimental research articles	8	15	11	14	8
Project reports	7	19	13	10	7
Recipe redactions	3	9	15	14	14
Poetry/artistic works	4	6	13	11	21

15: How likely are you to submit different types of content?



	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Neutral	Unlikely	Very unlikely
Book reviews	7	19	11	11	8
Project photos	13	20	11	6	7
Short, informal A&S stories	10	17	13	9	7

Artisan profiles	3	13	17	9	14
Letters to the editor	4	11	15	12	14
Reports on A&S classes/ displays/events	1	20	16	8	9
Competition documentation	6	16	16	8	11
Class handouts	10	18	16	7	5

16: What other ways would you like to share your A&S story in Cockatrice?

No response	46	
Social media	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blog and social media such as Facebook and Instagram • Maybe via social me • On FB page • Social media page because it would be convenient. I usually look at FB every morning/evening for about a half hour. • Social media.
Youtube	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know some people who do You Tube videos. Maybe you could do profiles on them? • Is youtube (or similar platforms) a possibly option? • Maybe through a YouTube channel?
Other (Content)	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diary of a project • I am a photographer so could be used as a resource fir other local crsfts peo0e to get better quality photos, fir a small fee • Maybe a children's section to entice the younger crowd. So they can put in things that they have made or interest them? • Might write an article featuring an excerpt from my published books. • "What we did at Festival/event" anecdotes.
Other (General)	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefer the PDF. Don't follow blogs too well. • Seriously the A&S experts frighten the bejesus out of me. They have a matrix for everything and some of them are so professional about it that they suck all the joy out of it. • The online magazine format used by Mark Calderwood was fantastic.

Section 5: General

17: Do you have any other feedback about Cockatrice that you'd like to share?

No response	38	
Happy with current publication	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep up the great work! It's a real treasure! • Loving what you are doing with it - enjoying the content! • I'm pleased to find out it exists • Thank you to you and the previous editors for all the work they have done in keeping it going! Well done. Its a resource I use and I point all newcomers towards and its a nice historical record of what we as a Kingdom have done! • Please don't stop. Love Cockatrice. • Good survey, nicely set out • Had not heard much about it so not got around to checking out yet properly • I am happy with it as is. • I appreciate the efforts to keep Cockatrice an active, engaging, Kingdom-managed publication (there was a time, now happily long past, when it all but died after becoming someone's personal fiefdom and then they lost interest - always have a good succession process!) • I love Cockatrice • I think it is amazing that it is still being produced after so many years. Keep up the good work. • I think you do an excellent job under trying circumstances.
Searchable online format	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please seriously consider a format change :) • Please start publishing things to web page, not to pdf. • Searchable back issues would be amazing! • Just the format shift to online blog. • I would like to see it move away from a quarterly format to a rolling article style with mobile optimiseatiin . With a good layout it would be more useful then the current format.
Not well known enough	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Its scope, application and even accesd is poorly kbow by newcomes and recent joiners • The profile needs to be raised. I think the Laurels need to get behind Cockatrice as being the place they'd like to see their students publishing, and the place that they go to look at the research skills of people outside their field, or outside their group. • basically need to make sure new members know about it. I'd

		also encourage members to prioritize it, as the 'peak publication' for A&S. we need to keep some things central - social media dilutes everything.
Other	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I used to love reading hardcopy of Cockatrice to our campsite at crown and Festival. • I would prefer Cockatrice to be more a part of my daily/weekly activity if I was going to take much notice and interact at all. I would prefer to have it as a copy that can print for myself, having access to it via email or Facebook. • at one point I volunteer to proofread and help with editing - my services were dismissed without contacting me, I was just dropped with no explanation or thank you • Ive often felt it was a bit elitist, that only the very best work was featured. Its not encouraging or welcoming for a beginner and daunting to then send something in that is obviously made by a beginner. It may have changed since i used to get it but more focus on education and supporting beginners or those learning new skills. It might help encourage someone to start something new or very different. A really big project could have a small update on an ongoing basis?